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TRUCK TREND

MAY/JUNE 2015

VOLUME 18, NUMBER 3

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TRUCK TREND
PICKUP TRUCK
OF THE **YEAR**

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After a long week of intense testing, the '15 Ford F-150 XLT FX4 proved that it had what it takes to stand alone at the top of the podium, earning the honor of becoming the 2015 Pickup Truck of the Year.
Photo: Robert Guio





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For The Love Of Truck

This issue marks a monumental milestone in the life of *Truck Trend*. After 17 years of tagging along with *Motor Trend* on their annual test, we've branched off and created our very own Pickup Truck of the Year program. Now, you might be asking why we would do something as crazy as creating more work for ourselves. As narcissistic as it may sound, the answer is simple: It's because we are the truck experts and are now ready to take the final step in asserting ourselves as such.

Before you get the torches lit and pitchforks sharpened, let's be clear: We have nothing but the utmost of respect for all of our colleagues across the hall at *Motor Trend*. There's nobody that does what they do better. Their level of expertise and thoroughness of testing and reporting on cars is second to none. We are forever indebted to them; had they not birthed us in 1998, you wouldn't be reading this today. That said, there was a reason that *Truck Trend* was created, which was to emulate the success that *Motor Trend* had in the car realm with experts from the pickup side of the auto industry.

It's been exactly one year since we officially split off from *Motor Trend* to become our own stand-alone entity. We truly hope that you, our readers, have noticed a change for the better. We now have more resources available to us, more freedom to tackle the stories that we feel pickup enthusiasts want to read about, and a larger team of truck experts at our disposal.

When developing our Pickup Truck of the Year program, we

looked at not only how *Motor Trend* structures their test but also how the other OTY programs that our staff has been involved in are run. We came up with a simple eligibility requirement. To be invited the pickup must be either all-new or significantly improved. That last bit is a touch ambiguous, but it simply means that a new or updated powertrain, suspension, or body would make a pickup eligible. A new trim level, sticker package, or addition of a minor feature (such as auto stop-start on an existing drivetrain) does not. Following these criteria, we identified and invited 11 models from 5 manufacturers and 9 accepted.

To build the best team of judges possible, we dug deep into our pool of truck experts from all areas of the *Truck Trend Network*. Combined, our crew holds over 75 years of experience working with, testing, and reviewing pickups, and more than double that as truck enthusiasts themselves. Joining us were experts with off-road, street, diesel, and custom truck backgrounds, along with current and former *Motor Trend* staffers (we stole the ones with truck experience).

We focused our time and energy on testing the areas that matter to true truck enthusiasts. So we took to the dragstrip to test performance in a safe and controlled environment. We then loaded each truck down with the equivalent of an average amount of cargo for each class of truck, and then did the same with a trailer. We logged several hundred miles of highway time, in each truck and in every sort of driving condition from dense traffic to wide-open highway. And finally, we headed off-road, since the majority of trucks sold are four-wheel-drive. Our testing was thorough and will only get better with time.

The bottom line is this: *Truck Trend* is where the pickup experts live. We test trucks not only because we have to, but also because it's our passion. **TT**



**WE TEST TRUCKS
NOT ONLY BECAUSE
WE HAVE TO, BUT
ALSO BECAUSE IT'S
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EMISSIONS CHECK

BIG GAS HEMI

I very much enjoyed your diesel versus gas articles in the Jan./Feb. '15 issue. I have owned both diesel pickups and gas pickups, and there are certainly pros and cons to both. A comparison of the Ram 6.4L Hemi with its robust components to the Ram Cummins would have highlighted a modern gas engine to a modern diesel better than using the dated GM 6.0L to the Duramax. I was in the market for a new truck last year and seriously compared the Cummins to the 6.4L Hemi in the Ram 2500. I ended up purchasing a Ram 2500 with the 6.4L Hemi instead of the Cummins for a number of reasons, mostly economical. The Cummins would have cost me between \$8,000 and \$9,000 more initially, along with higher costs for maintenance and fuel. The diesel might be worth the extra cost if I towed all the time. I tow only a few times a year and have found that the 6.4L is relatively economical for a large gas engine. I average 16-17 mpg unloaded, 18-20 mpg on the highway, and got 12 mpg towing a flatbed with a heavy tractor. The new Hemi is a keeper. It provides those of us who cannot justify the cost of a diesel with capabilities more than sufficient for most needs. I will not rule out a diesel some time in the future, but for now, I am extremely pleased with the Ram 6.4L Hemi.

Keith Kuczka

Via Internet

You may have noticed that our gas versus diesel stories included a ½-ton, heavy-duty, and SUV. Our desire was to use a different

brand for each story, so with the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel being the only ½-ton on the market with a diesel engine, that's the one Ram was used for. We have nothing against the 6.4L Hemi engine; in fact, we love it! It produces tons of power, and thanks in part to the use of cylinder-deactivation, the engine achieves surprising fuel economy, as you've noted. Not everyone who needs an HD truck needs a diesel engine. For most, the gasoline option would suit them just fine.

ECO MINDED

I was wondering if you ever gave real-life fuel economy numbers for all three Ram 1500 truck models available. I am interested in buying a Ram 1500 and wanted to know the real-world fuel economy numbers to help with my decision.

Drue Wood

Anchorage, Alaska

That is an excellent question and a story idea that we've been kicking around for some time. To best answer your question, no, we've not had all three trucks at the same time. However, looking in our test archives I can tell you that we've averaged 18.5mpg with the 3.6L Pentastar V-6, 15.4mpg with the 5.7L Hemi V-8, and 19.9mpg with the EcoDiesel V-6. These numbers are averages and from separate tests, so they don't directly correlate to each other but should give you a good idea of what to expect.



ECO MINDED

NUMBERS GAME

I know you are all enamored with the Ram EcoDiesel, and it is a great engine. However, if you compare the Ram with the new Ford 2.7L EcoBoost and do some analysis on the total cost of ownership, the Ford wins by a long shot. Just the cost differences in fuel and oil changes amounts to over \$1,000 per year, assuming 20,000 miles traveled, four oil changes (\$40 versus \$200), and a price differential of \$0.80 per gallon. I used 28 mpg for the Ram and 26 mpg for the Ford. Amazing huh?

Jim Kline

Polkton, North Carolina

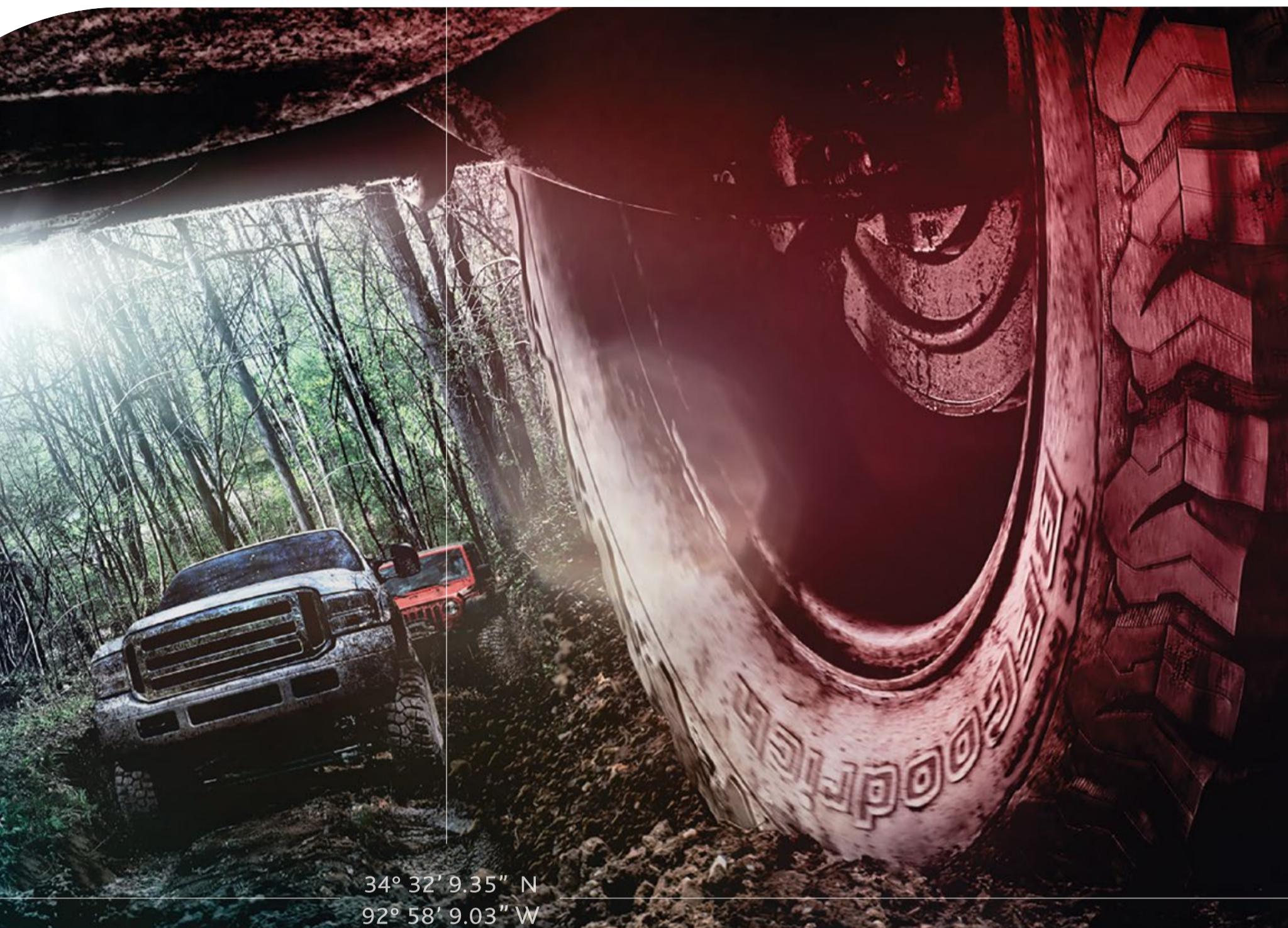
You're halfway there. Let's see if we can expand on your idea a bit.

Both engines have a 10,000-mile oil change interval, so each would receive two changes in the 20,000-mile time frame. For the Ford, you should be able to get The Works

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EMISSIONS CHECK

package for \$40 (before taxes and fees) at the dealer. The EcoDiesel will ring in higher, in the \$120-\$150 range, because it uses 11 quarts of oil and an expensive (\$30) filter. That said, Ford's is a coupon price, if you don't get that deal your oil change will be quite a bit closer to that of the EcoDiesel.

Fuel economy is where things get sticky. We've been able to test and confirm that the Ram EcoDiesel will average get the mileage claimed, even achieving 32mpg on the highway with a fully loaded crew-cab four-wheel-drive model. What we haven't seen yet is the 2.7L EcoBoost get anywhere near this. Our sister publication, Motor Trend, tested both the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel and Ford F-150 2.7L EcoBoost using their IntelliChoice Real MPG testing equipment and methods and came to the conclusion that in real-world use, the EcoDiesel nets 21 percent better fuel economy (highway) than the EcoBoost unloaded and 35 percent better with a load. The 2.7L EcoBoost returned results of 17/22/19 while the EcoDiesel knocked down 18/28/22.

What does this mean exactly? With the current national average fuel prices what they are (and remember, gasoline is artificially low and will rebound) the 2.7L EcoBoost enjoys a 1-cent-per-mile advantage over the EcoDiesel. However, if you live in a metropolitan area such as Los Angeles like we do, the scenario is flipped, and the EcoDiesel gains a 1-cent-per-mile advantage over the EcoBoost.

So you are correct, the EcoDiesel does cost more to own, at the moment, and depending on where you live. However, it's nowhere near the \$1,000 per year discrepancy that you claimed. And if you add any sort of load or trailer to the equation, the advantage quickly turns in favor of the EcoDiesel.

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

I just read your "Gas vs. Diesel—Past, Present, and Future" (Jan./Feb. '15) article. I liked it, but in what state have you seen diesel for less than regular unleaded?

Charlie Loan

Via Internet

At the time we wrote that story, gasoline and diesel were relatively close in price. Most everywhere we went diesel was more expensive than gas, as you've found. However, we did pass the occasional station that had good ole #2 for less than regular unleaded. It was rare, but they were out there. One specific example was from several stations along I-35 between Dallas and San Antonio, Texas, and parts of Southern California. Now, that said, gasoline prices



NUMBERS GAME

have dropped significantly since then, and the disparity between gasoline and diesel is wider once again.

COULD'VE HAD A V-8

After Ford's announcement about the new '17 F-150 Raptor being equipped with only a V-6 I am so glad that I got my Raptor six months ago with the 6.2L V-8. The Raptor should always come with a V-8. With the Raptor going V-6, I think we are now seeing the beginning of the end for the American V-8 pickup. Sad.

Rick Laster

Via Internet

We're in the same camp as you, sort of. While it's true that we're going to miss the

deep throaty rumble of the 6.2L V-8, there's no arguing that power is power. And with the '17 Raptor's 3.5L EcoBoost V-6 engine rumored to be churning out an astonishing 450hp, we think we might let this one slide. The aftermarket will build a sweet sounding exhaust for it, and fuel economy can only go up (the 6.2L was a thirsty little bugger).

With regards to the end of the American V-8, we couldn't disagree more! In Ford's case, you might be right, but look at the lineup that both Chrysler and GM are bringing to the table. The 5.7L Hemi is still the bread and butter of the Ram 1500 lineup, and the new 6.4L Hemi that they launched last year in the 2500s simply rocks. Jeep is keeping V-8s alive in the Grand Cherokee, and Chrysler's SRT products are more powerful than ever before. GM hasn't shied away either, bringing out a new line of EcoTec3 direct injection V-8s across their line up of trucks and SUVs. So while Ford may be putting a lot of emphasis on smaller displacement and turbocharging, the American V-8 is far from the endangered species list, for now. **TT**



WHERE IN THE WORLD?

HOW TO REACH US

For all editorial questions:

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Range Rover Evoque NW8 Debuts in Montreal



THANKS TO the insatiable consumer appetite for upscale compact SUVs, Range Rover announced a special edition of the Evoque at the Montreal International Auto Show. The NW8 (named for the Abbey Road Studios' post code in England) will come exclusively in Fuji White with a Firenze Red roof and door mirrors, with production limited to 1,000 units. A "zebra" pattern adorns the treadplates, seat tags, and key fob, inspired by the crosswalk from the Beatles' famous album, "Abbey Road."

Next Jeep Wrangler Could Feature Exotic Materials, Eight-Speed Auto

THE NEXT Jeep Wrangler, expected in 2017, could see a revolutionary redesign. Mike Manley, head honcho for the Jeep brand, said hybrid powertrains were possible for the off-roader. He also suggested aluminum, high-strength steel, and even carbon fiber could even find their way into the Jeep. We expect the company to incorporate its ZF-designed eight-speed automatic as well, boosting economy and performance.

Lest a hybrid Wrangler sound like heresy, Manley said "incredible crawl ratios" could be achieved with the torque and output of electric motors.



FREE 2017 Ford F-150 Raptor (Models) In Detroit



THE FORD F-150 Raptor is one of the most licensed toys in Ford Motor Company history, and it looks like Ford wants to continue to maintain that reputation with the new model. To help stoke interest in its new off-road hero with a younger (and young at heart) demographic, Ford teamed up with scale model maker Revell to give away 20-piece SnapTite kits of its forthcoming truck at the North American International Auto Show. The SnapTite Raptor toy model will be available through retail toy outlets in June.

Ford Plans on Limiting Aluminum to Trucks, Mostly

DON'T EXPECT to see an all-aluminum Ford Fusion, Fiesta, or Focus any time soon. That is according to Ford President of the Americas Joe Hinrichs, who said in an interview that aluminum construction was selected for the F-150 and the upcoming F-Series Super Duty because the weight savings aluminum allows yield the largest competitive gains in trucks thanks to the increase in towing



capacity and rated payload. The company's future use of aluminum in passenger cars and crossovers will likely be limited to individual body panels, like doors, hoods, and trunks, since there are more cost-effective ways of increasing fuel economy in those kinds of vehicles.

2015 Ram EcoDiesel HFE Sets Fuel-Economy Standard for Trucks

SMALL AERODYNAMIC improvements mean the '15 Ram 1500 EcoDiesel HFE gets better fuel economy than any other pickup on the road today. Rated at 21 mpg city and 29 mpg

highway, the HFE will be offered as a Ram 1500 Tradesman Quad Cab 4x2 with a 6-foot, 4-inch bed and 20-inch wheels. Wheel-to-wheel side steps and a folding three-piece tonneau cover help

smooth air around the HFE, giving it one more mpg in both city and highway driving than its standard EcoDiesel brother. Nearly 30 mpg in a truck that can tow over 7,000 pounds is amazing.

U.S. Demand Forces Toyota to Import More SUVs and Crossovers

TOYOTA WILL increase production at its SUV plants in Japan and Canada to keep up with demand in the United States. Toyota's popular RAV4 and Lexus' successful RX and NX have encouraged the company to import more vehicles to the U.S.

Toyota will not build any more manufacturing facilities until March 2016 at the earliest. At that point, the company will reassess demand for their models and consider building other manufacturing plants. In the short term, increasing production is more cost-effective than building new facilities, which can cost hundreds of millions of dollars and leave the company in a lurch if demand suddenly drops off.



2015 GMC Canyon Nightfall Loses Chrome, Gains Features

FANS OF the color black have reason to celebrate with the GMC Canyon Nightfall Edition. With a unique black grille, side-assist steps, and Dark Argent aluminum wheels, the Canyon Nightfall features much less chrome than its SLE crew cab brother for a stealthy, sinister look. It also comes with factory options like automatic climate control, remote start, rear-vision camera, OnStar with 4G-LTE Wi-Fi, IntelliLink, and SiriusXM satellite radio, all at a discount over choosing those options separately.



Land Rover Adds Diesel Engine to its U.S. Lineup for 2016

LAND ROVER will join the growing list of U.S.-bound oil-burning luxury autos for the '16 model year. Available on the Range Rover and Range Rover Sport, Land Rover's Td6 3.0L V-6 will make 254 hp and 440 lb-ft of torque and should get 22 mpg city and 28 mpg highway. That represents a 32 percent improvement over the company's supercharged gasoline V-6.

Extensive measures have been taken to isolate passengers from NVH, and the diesel Rangies will have a Selective Catalyst Reduction system using urea diesel exhaust fluid to keep noxious emissions at bay.



VOLKSWAGEN CROSS COUPE GTE SHOWS NEW STYLING DIRECTION FOR SUVS

VOLKSWAGEN'S CROSS Coupe GTE concept, first shown at the North American International Auto Show in Detroit, shows the new look that VW SUVs will have in the future. Starting with the upcoming, unnamed seven-seat crossover, new VW light trucks will feature trim, crisp styling, starting with

the Cross Coupe GTE's three-opening grille with integrated headlights and turn signals. The Cross Coupe GTE's front fenders are also flared and scalloped, giving the crossover a modern look. Inside, a Bauhaus-inspired interior is uniquely Volkswagen but contemporary and fresh as well.

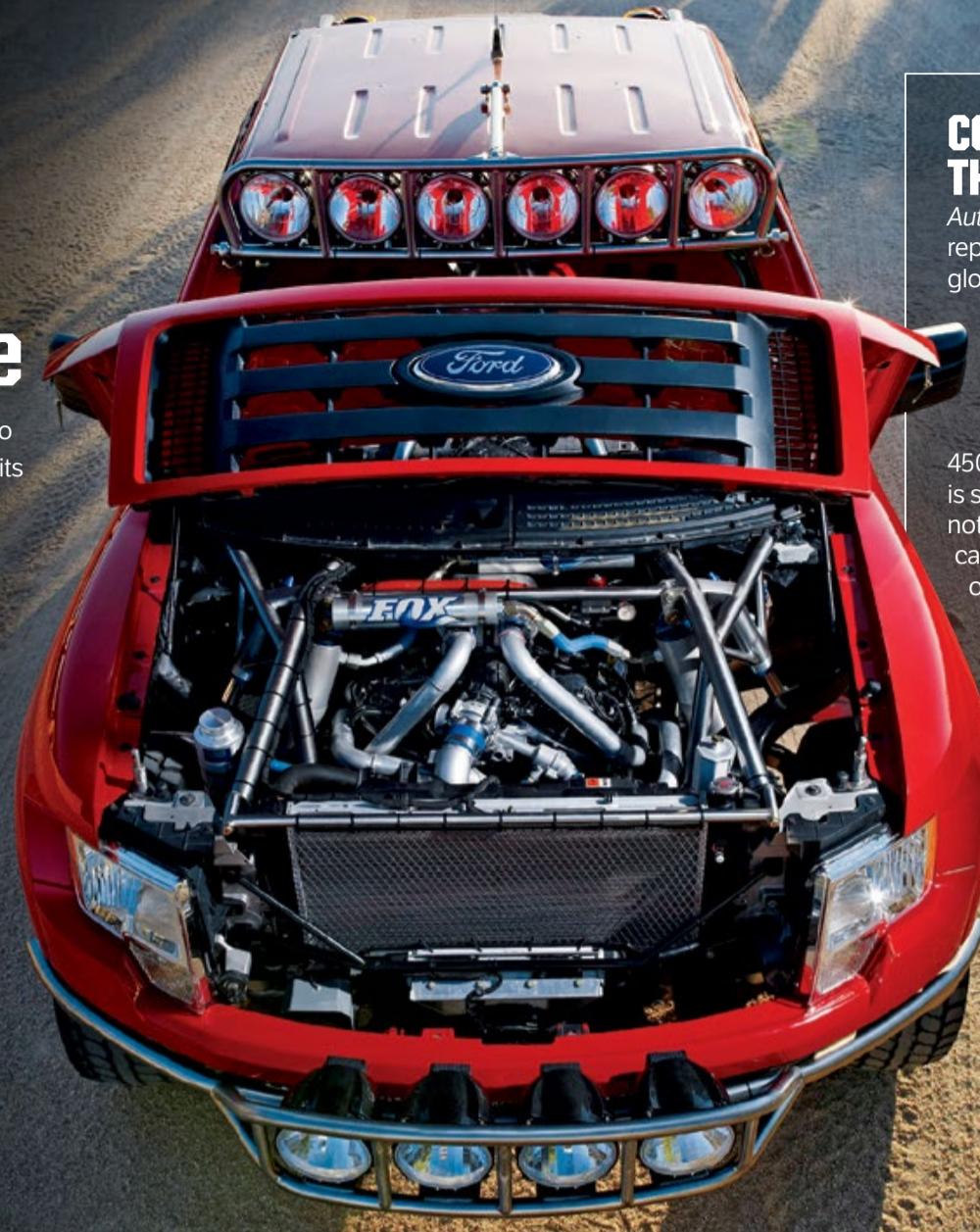
The Cross Coupe is powered by VW's VR6 engine, mated to an electric motor in the front and an electric motor in the rear. This through-the-road all-wheel drive system has a total output of 355 hp and 280 lb-ft of torque, and the plug-in hybrid powertrain has an electric-only range of 20 miles.



Ford Registers "EcoBeast" with U.S. Patent and Trademark Office

UP UNTIL now, Ford's EcoBoost line of GDI turbo engines has been marketed primarily on the merits of their combination of performance and fuel economy.

That may change, as records from the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office show that the company registered "EcoBeast" as a trademark name. We're not sure what that means, as the recently revealed F-150 Raptor carried an EcoBoost badge, so the EcoBeast could be reserved for an even-higher performance F-150 or other Ford performance models.



COULD THIS BE THE ECOBEAST?

Automobile magazine reports that Raj Nair, Ford's global product development chief, let slip during a television interview with Fox Sports that the '17 Raptor would have 450 hp. Publicly, Ford is saying this figure is not official and that final calibration and certification on the engine has not yet been completed. Nevertheless, based on some other sources we've heard from, we expect the new Raptor's performance to be spectacular.

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TRENDING NOW

2015 CHEVROLET SILVERADO CUSTOM SPORT PAYS HOMAGE TO 1960S ANCESTORS

CHEVROLET'S NEWEST trim package for the Silverado 1500 LT and LTZ hearkens back to the Custom Sport Trucks of the '60s. The Silverado Custom Sport will feature monochrome front and rear bumpers and a body-colored grille with chrome accents; chrome door handles, mirror caps, and body moldings; projector headlights; and 20-inch wheels. Tow hooks and heated mirrors round out the Custom Sport's functional upgrades.



GLOBAL JEEP SALES SURPASS 1M FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 2014

JEEP'S GLOBAL 2014 sales crested the 1 million mark for the first time in the history of the brand, as 1,017,019 new Jeeps found homes throughout the year.

Credit may rest with strong sales of the Cherokee compact SUV, which was the first American vehicle to ever be featured on Japan's Top 10 list, compiled by that nation's automotive journalists. Jeep anticipates even more growth for 2015 with the addition of its micro-machine, the Renegade. The small crossover has already been met with sales success in Europe, where it's been available since late 2014. In order to lower costs and increase production, Jeep plans to open new manufacturing facilities in Europe, Brazil, and China.



AUDI Q7 LOSES WEIGHT, GAINS EFFICIENCY AND STYLE

THE AUDI Q7 has always been something of an also-ran in the luxury-SUV market, flagging behind segment leaders like the BMW X5 and Mercedes-Benz GL-Class.

However, the new generation receives more high-strength steel and rings in at just 4,343 pounds to increase efficiency and performance.

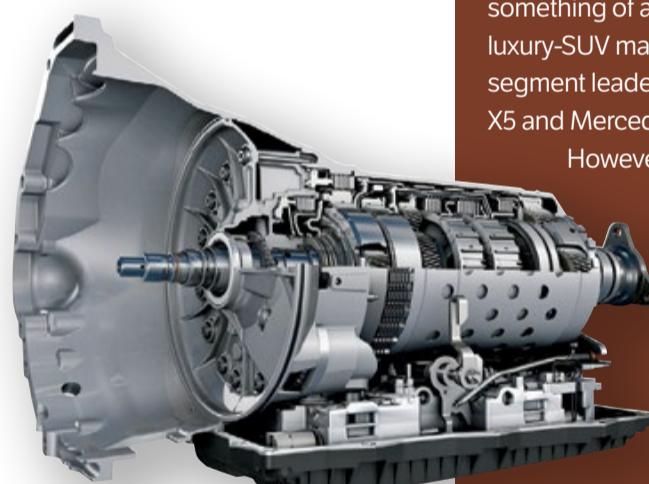
The new body is more sculpted and more wagon-like than the outgoing Q7.

Although the Q7 is shorter and narrower than its predecessor, Audi says it offers as much or more head and legroom for passengers in all three rows. Audi's minimalist interior styling makes an appearance here, as does a supercharged gas or turbocharged diesel engine, both V-6s displacing 3.0 liters. Those engines will be joined later by other powertrains, including a plug-in hybrid diesel system that offers an electric-only range of 35 miles and an estimated 138 MPGe on a full charge. Even the 3.0 TDI will achieve an amazing 41 mpg, according to Audi.

CHRYSLER INVESTS \$266 MILLION IN TRANSMISSION PLANT

THE POPULARITY of Chrysler's eight-speed automatic transmission has prompted the company to expand the plant that builds the gearbox. The eight-speed is used in many of Fiat Chrysler Automobiles' rear-wheel-drive vehicles, including the Jeep Grand Cherokee and Ram 1500 pickup, and as we stated before, the upcoming Wrangler will likely get the cogswapper.

The move to the advanced transmission is motivated by increased efficiency and performance, but the eight-speed also offers smooth, nearly imperceptible shifting.



LAND ROVER PLANS TO SUBMIT FORMAL COMPLAINT OVER CHINESE EVOQUE LOOKALIKE

THE RANGE Rover Evoque is one of the most interesting, stylish designs on the market, but while imitation may be flattering, Jaguar Land Rover (JLR) has every right to protest outright copying.

We're talking about the Landwind X7, a Chinese-market SUV that looks almost indistinguishable from the little Range Rover. JLR isn't happy about the alleged copy, and

Land Rover intends to complain to Chinese officials about the Landwind. Adding insult to injury, the X7 was unveiled at the Guangzhou Motor Show on the same day and place as the China-produced Evoque, which sells for nearly three times the price of the Landwind.

JLR will be consulting with its partner, Chinese automaker Chery, to find a way through this situation.

VOLVO XC90 T8 PLUG-IN HYBRID TO GET 400 HP

Volvo's range-topping XC90 T8 Twin Engine will produce 400 hp and 472 lb-ft of torque, according to the company. Powered by a 2.0L turbo and supercharged I-4 and a rear-mounted electric motor, Volvo estimates the T8 will reach 60 mph in less than 6 seconds, while it has an electric-only range of 25 miles and an efficiency rating of 59 MPGe (presumably not while gunning it to 60). This XC90 features an innovative all-wheel drive, with the electric motors driving only the rear wheels. This, combined with advanced electronics, will portion torque precisely among the front and rear wheels for maximum cornering abilities and confidence in low-traction situations. And as you'd expect, the big Volvo features everything in the company's safety-equipment arsenal, including several airbags, roll prevention, and a proprietary system that prepares the vehicle if the driver inadvertently runs off the road.



GMC HINTS AT RUGGED SUV IN THE FUTURE: THE NEXT JIMMY?

As the Toyota FJ Cruiser gets put out to pasture, the rugged, off-road-ready SUV segment is down to one: the Jeep Wrangler. That may change if latest rumors are to be believed. GMC brand boss Duncan Aldred says he thinks there may be room in the GMC stable for an off-road SUV similar to the Wrangler. The future model could share many parts with the GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado to reduce development cost, and it would almost certainly focus on efficiency as well as capability to match the next-gen Wrangler. We'd love to see the SUV return with a heritage name like "Jimmy," but for now, these are only rumors.



BENTLEY'S UPCOMING SUV TO BE NAMED "BENTAYGA"

Combining the words "Bentley" and "Taiga" (the world's largest snowforest and terrestrial biome), the English manufacturer's upcoming SUV will be called Bentayga. Bentley claims it will be the world's most expensive, luxurious, exclusive SUV. It will come equipped with the brand's 4.0L V-8 and 6.0L W-12, in addition to potential TDI V-8, TDI V-12, and hybrid powertrains.

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WHALE WATCHING

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Pickup Lines

When the tariff-driven proliferation of four-door sport-utilities began in the early '90s *Car & Driver* magazine drove a bunch of them to the Arctic Ocean where, if memory serves, at least one of their pilots fell in. Reader-protest letters to the Editor said if they wanted to know about such vehicles they would read *Four Wheeler*, which C&D kindly printed while we at *Four Wheeler* enjoyed the recognition.

Four Wheeler had already split Four Wheeler of the Year and pickup awards in 1990. *Motor Trend* had done cars for decades and trucks a year earlier, but didn't separate SUVs until they began replacing sedans in 1999. Now *Truck Trend* is divorced and has its own unique truck of the year program, and others are added yearly, so *Motor Trend* is reminding us they test trucks because someone has to.

Which makes me wonder what a truck is and how it's to be used.

Does a truck need to be a pickup? The Explorer SportTrac and Escalade EXT were both included in previous *Motor Trend* truck of the year competitions, which Cadillac didn't like because they insisted it was built on a utility chassis (Suburban), not a pickup chassis. Perhaps Cadillac was

unaware the Suburban was derived from a pickup, as the SportTrac first came from the Ranger-based Explorer.

Does a truck need to be a commercial vehicle? No. There are commercial vehicles from every segment—which is why your car warranty might not work with your Uber services—but a truck certainly needs to be suitable for commercial use. Some states automatically assume a pickup is commercial and your tags cost much more because of it.

Does a truck need a frame? Honda, Ford, and Ram would say no (Ridgeline, Transit, and ProMaster, respectively), but does selling them as commercial vehicles make them trucks? Easy modification is a truck hallmark and little is

easier to fiddle with than a steel frame to mount hitches, winches, racks, and deer-resistant or surf-fishing bumpers.

Does a truck need a separate bed section of bodywork? This implies the truck has to be a pickup to which you could attach hardware or a camper that won't affect the cab body-work, but what about a cab-and-chassis van? Or pieces like the Hummer H1 pickup (two- or four-door) with integral bed/cab bodywork but a separate frame?

Does a truck need to drive all its wheels, or does it merely need to offer that choice? If it drives all the wheels, must it be able to do that on pavement and off, and must it offer low-range gearing? Regardless of drive, does it need to be able to go "off road"? *Motor Trend*'s research said the "majority" of owners "seldom go off-road," yet 70 percent of their Truck of the Year field was 4WD, and for retail sales, the percentage is even higher.

Does it need to tow or have a hitch? I have friends who use hitches for mounting a vise, rack, or clevis for recovery but never tow anything. And if it does need to tow, how much? Do you use rated maximum for the line or particular model you want, the average for the segment, a percentage of its rating, or what?

Can you use government's definition for light truck? Absolutely not. I don't think ground clearance, folding rear seats, driven wheels, the chicken tax, or GVWR changing (until 5 years ago a compact truck was less than 4500 pounds GVWR, but now it's 6000) has anything to do with it. And you can't ask the manufacturers either, since they are complicit in coming up with many of the stupid classifications of "trucks" we have now.

So, disregarding the standard definitions about moving freight or personnel or the top of a flagpole or staff, now's your chance to tell us how you define truck. We'll not say if you're right or wrong, only that we'll be more relevant for people who use trucks as trucks and know one when we see one. **TT**

CAN YOU USE GOVERNMENT'S DEFINITION FOR LIGHT TRUCK? ABSOLUTELY NOT!"



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Truck Power vs. Car Power

In today's automotive media universe, it's all about creating sensationalistic headlines to get the clicks. And with such models as the 707hp Dodge Challenger Hellcat, the 650hp Corvette Z06, and the just-announced '16 Cadillac CTS-V with 640 hp, there's no shortage of high-horse hardware on the market. Pickup trucks, the modern-day beasts of burden, don't get nearly the attention or headlines of those high-potency steeds. However, if you look at the sales numbers, pickups are some of the best-selling vehicles in the country, so their significance is indisputable.

JUST TRY TOWING 8,000 POUNDS WITH A CHALLENGER HELLCAT.”

engines. On a more modest scale, the combination of 28 highway mpg and a 9,200-pound max towing capacity on the Ram 1500 EcoDiesel is an achievement that would have been unthinkable a decade ago.

In their respective context, the numbers generated by today's trucks are no less impressive than those high-powered quasi-exotics. Consider the 30,000-plus-pound towing capacity offered by the Ram 3500 and Ford F-450, not to mention the 850-plus lb-ft torque rating generated by their diesel

One of the truck engineers for the Detroit Three once told me that engineering for trucks was fundamentally about "doing more with less." This is perfectly embodied by the new F-150. Sure, the main driver behind its transition to an aluminum body was fuel economy, but the weight savings also translated to higher towing and payload ratings, two of the primary tasks trucks are called upon beyond point A to B commuting.

And the innovation and improvement is likely to continue. The '16 GMC Canyon and Chevrolet Colorado diesel could set a new standard in the midsize segment with the prospect of more than 7,000 pounds of towing capability with a 30-plus-mpg EPA highway rating. And if you thought eight gears were a lot for a truck transmission, get ready for 10-speed automatics coming in the next few years, which promise even greater fuel economy than the impressive figures being delivered by today's models.

Even though today's trucks may not be generating the eye-popping horsepower, lateral Gs, and 0-60 and quarter-mile times of the performance cars, their performance for their intended purposes is no less impressive. Just try towing 8,000 pounds with a Challenger Hellcat or loading down a Z06 with 2,000 pounds in its rear hatch. My hat's off to the engineers designing today's trucks, giving us more efficient and more capable options than we've ever had before. **TT**



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NINE HEAVYWEIGHTS BATTLE FOR GLORY

By Jason Gonderman • Photography By Robert Guio

There comes a time in everyone's life when they must leave the comfort and stability of what they have always known. It's a scary and often-challenging time, being forced to spread their wings and either fly off into the sky or tumble hard to the ground. Birthed by *Motor Trend* in 1998, it's now our time to step out of the nest and do things on our own.

Motor Trend's Truck of the Year award is known throughout the industry as being one of the highest honors a new truck can receive. However—no offense to them—the folks at *Motor Trend* are car people; it's what they know and love. So we got together and decided that it was time for the pickup

experts at *Truck Trend* to forge ahead solo, run our own test, and pick a winner that we feel is most deserving. And that is what you are seeing today, *Truck Trend's* inaugural Pickup Truck of the Year.

For our 2015 Pickup Truck of the Year competition, we invited all models that were either all new or significantly updated. Nine pickups from five manufacturers accepted the invitation. Chevrolet entered their all-new midsize offering, the Colorado, and the Silverado 1500, which came equipped with the company's new eight-speed transmission. GMC brought their new Canyon (the midsize cousin of Colorado) and Sierra 2500, which received

an extensive body refresh. Ford offered up the completely redesigned F-150, along with an F-350 Super Duty with the improved second-generation 6.7L Power Stroke diesel engine. Toyota created the specialized TRD Pro off-road package and sent us an equipped Tacoma and Tundra. Rounding out the field was the Ram 2500 Power Wagon, with so many updates from the previous generation we don't have the space here to mention them.

Testing began just outside of Los Angeles at the Auto Club Speedway in Fontana, California. We ran each pickup through a battery of instrumented testing, which started with checking their weight



(full fuel, no driver) before testing 0-60 mph acceleration, 60-0 mph braking, quarter-mile elapsed time, 0-60 mph with payload (500 pounds for the midsize trucks, 1,000 for the $\frac{1}{2}$ -tons, and 1,500 for the HDs), 60-0 mph braking with payload, and 0-60 mph acceleration with a trailer (loaded to 75 percent of each truck's maximum towing capacity). Our team of judges hit the road early the second day, running each driver and truck through a 20-mile loop with their designated payload and then again with a trailer (loaded to the same 75 percent as the day before).

After a long slog through LA traffic, we ventured

into the Mojave Desert for a day filled with nearly 100 miles of dirt trails. Through rough roads, muddy basins, rocky climbs, and sandy washes, we were able to evaluate the trucks' tires, gearing, traction aids, electronic traction controls, ground clearance, suspension tuning, four-wheel-drive systems, thermal management, and overall vehicle dynamics. While it's true that most truck owners won't use their pickup as strictly an off-road toy, the fact still remains that the majority sold are four-wheel-drive, and we wouldn't be doing our due diligence if we didn't test these systems in conditions like what many buyers experience.

Finally, each truck was driven over a several-hundred-mile highway route in an effort to gauge real-world fuel economy. In between tests, our panel of expert judges spent time with each pickup studying interior ergonomics, rear seat comfort, technology ease-of-use, build quality, and the features and benefits of each truck.

Each pickup brought with it a unique skill set, and they were all impressive to our judges in one area or another. However, in the end, only one could take the top honors. The winner showed exceptional performance in each of the tested criteria and never left our panel of judges disappointed. Which pickup scored the highest? Read on to find out.

CONTENDER MIDSIZE TRUCK

2015 Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro



WELL SUITED FOR THE DIRTY LIFE

Thanks to extensive off-road enhancements for the '15 model year, the Stormtrooper-chic Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro is tons of fun when the road gets dusty.

For those who live in a ruthless environment like Tatooine, there would be nothing more well suited for blasting you across the harsh desert landscape. The TRD Pro's Bilstein shocks (equipped with remote reservoirs, 60mm pistons, and 18mm shafts) and TRD springs provide 2 inches of lift and an additional inch of wheel travel. TRD wheels wrapped in BFGoodrich All-Terrain tires give the Tacoma the power to grab the dirt hard and not let go. The Tacoma devoured our desert off-road loop and asked for more. Its only real rivals in that

terrain were the larger, more powerful, Tundra TRD Pro and Ram 2500 Power Wagon.

However, once you hit the pavement, the Tacoma's age starts to show. Without a major redesign in ten years, the Tacoma suffers from outdated interior plastics, tons of jiggles and squeaks over broken pavement, and a dated infotainment system (especially compared to the GMC IntelliLink system in the Canyon).

The TRD exhaust sounds decent, but it booms loudly on the highway, matching the tires' on-road thrum and making the Taco a less pleasant place to spend long stretches of time. It also has fewer features

The Tacoma TRD Pro looks cool and is a blast to drive off-road. For better and for worse, it's a very old-school truck—inefficient and rough around the edges, but rugged and very fun.

WE LIKE:
A ride with a seasoned driver proves this little Taco is the real deal off-road. Bilstein nailed the shock tuning; the truck soaks up the roughest terrain with ease.

WE DON'T LIKE:
The brakes are very touchy on the road while ABS is too aggressive off of it. Interior styling is very dated.

and amenities than its competition, but the payoff is simple, old-fashioned ergonomics. We also love the throwback "TOYOTA" script replacing the rounded-T logo on the front grille.

Coming in at \$38,300, the Tacoma is outclassed by the cheaper, more polished Chevrolet Colorado Z71. The TRD Pro is a lot of fun (and it's the only truck in this test available with a manual transmission and six-cylinder engine), but it's clearly a single-purpose vehicle. If your trucking is confined to tight trails and the open desert, it's the perfect choice. However, if eating up miles of whoops isn't your thing, then you might look elsewhere. **Brett T. Evans**

2015 Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro

BASE PRICE: \$37,415

PRICE AS TESTED: \$38,300

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 16/21/18

ENGINE: 4.0L DOHC 24-valve V-6

power @ 5200 rpm 236 hp	torque @ 4000 rpm 266 lb-ft	trans 5 speed auto
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*500 pounds of payload **Not equipped with a tow package

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 7.93 seconds

QUARTER MILE: 16.09 seconds @ 85.9 mph

BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 134.57 ft

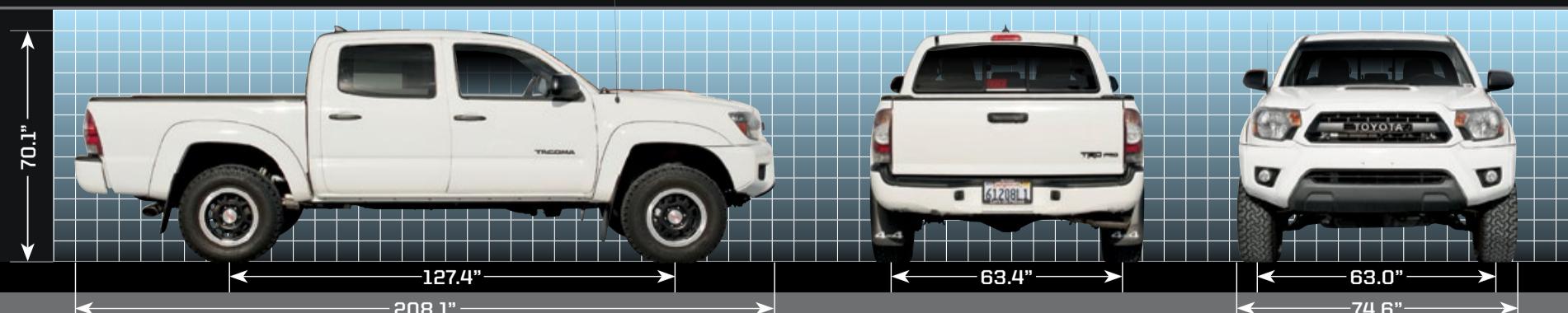
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 8.69 seconds*

BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 133.92 ft*

ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): N/A**

WEIGHT: 4,339 lbs

TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 16.50/19.60



CONTENDER HEAVY-DUTY TRUCK

2015 Ford F-350 Super Duty King Ranch

The F-350 King Ranch would make a great long-haul tow rig. Epic capability, fantastic seats, and thoroughly respectable fuel economy made this the favorite truck for some of our staff.



CAPABLE LUXURY LINER
IN NEED OF REFINEMENT

Without a doubt, the '15 Ford F-350 Super Duty was the most capable truck in our test when it came to towing and hauling. With a new turbocharger, improved fuel injection, and strengthened engine internals, the new-for-'15 Gen II 6.7L Power Stroke diesel V-8 produces an astonishing 440 hp and an unreal 860 lb-ft of torque.

Its payload and towing ratings were tops in this test. Even with its extra weight for being a 1-ton (tipping the scales at 8,066 pounds), the Power Stroke had no trouble keeping up with traffic. The diesel provided superb throttle response, with

WE LIKE:
Throttle response is excellent, and has best-in-test power and torque. Interior trimmed with luxurious, beautiful leather, and the exterior styling is quite handsome.

WE DON'T LIKE:
A noisy truck in need of some refinement. 1-ton suspension the harshest ride in the test.

near-instant power when passing and merging.

However, things looked a bit less rosy once the trailer was unhitched. The F-350's solid front axle and heavy-duty suspension give it some hauling chops, but chops aren't necessarily what you want when describing ride quality. The truck road amazingly well for a 1-ton on most highway surfaces. However, the right combination of expansion joints provided quite the back adjustment. Thankfully, the sumptuous leather seats help lessen the heavy-duty ride.

The interior has a dated feel, with a hard dash and door plastics with sharp joints; the three-tone color combo was too busy;

and the fake wood trim looked more like veneered cardboard. However, the F-350's low dash and high seating position meant that this was a surprisingly easy truck to drive around town. Even the Canyon and Colorado seemed harder to place, thanks to their pinched windows and down-low seats. In the F-350, visibility was a complete non-issue.

Overall, the F-350 won several fans thanks to its great power and relatively easy driving manner. However, it's in desperate need of interior refinement, something we suspect is coming next year. If Ford keeps the prodigious Power Stroke in the next Super Duty, it will be a serious contender, not only for the top spot in its class but in the pickup market as a whole. **Brett T. Evans**



ACCEL 0-60 MPH:	8.28 seconds
QUARTER MILE:	16.16 seconds @ 88.9 mph
BRAKING 60-0 MPH:	146.38 ft
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD):	8.96 seconds*
BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD):	146.90 ft*
ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING):	17.20 seconds**
WEIGHT:	8,066 lbs
TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST):	12.61/17.08

2015 Ford F-350 Super Duty King Ranch

BASE PRICE: \$54,895

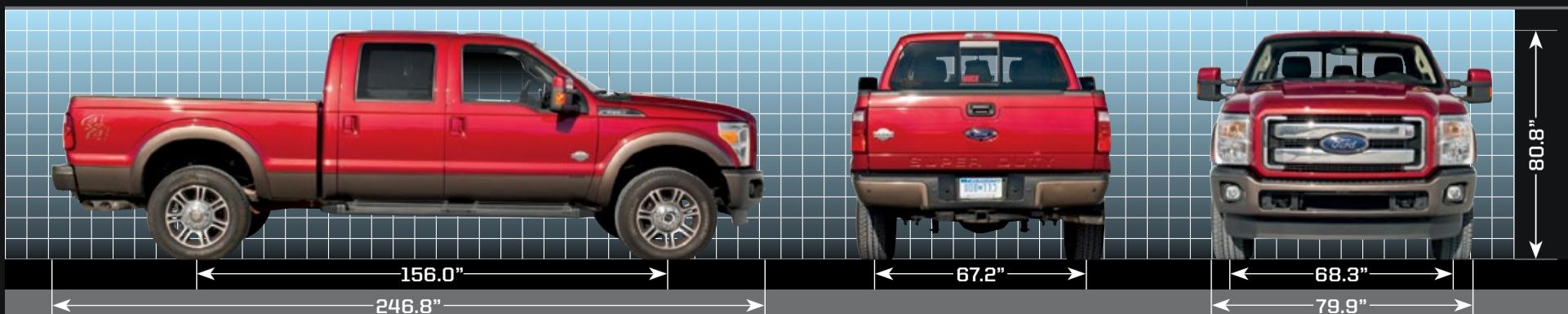
PRICE AS TESTED: \$68,460

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): N/A

ENGINE: 6.7L Power Stroke V-8 turbodiesel

power @ 2800 rpm	torque @ 1600 rpm	trans
440 hp	860 lb-ft	6 speed auto

*1,500 pounds of payload **10,560-pound trailer weight



CONTENDER 1/2-TON TRUCK

2015 Toyota Tundra TRD Pro



FULLSIZE FUN

When the updated Tundra debuted for the '14 model year, many were disappointed by the seemingly minimal mechanical changes over its predecessor, which debuted as an '07 model. Cosmetic updates inside and out were the biggest changes. But Toyota has partially redeemed itself with the introduction of the '15 Tundra TRD Pro. One look at its blacked-out block letter grille makes it clear what model it has in its crosshairs. The irony is not lost on us that it is coming to market just as the Ford F-150 SVT Raptor takes a temporary hiatus.

So what exactly does the TRD Pro package give you? Aside from the unique grille and logo-stamped bedsides, it adds Bilstein remote-reservoir shocks (with 60mm

pistons and 18mm shafts), TRD-tuned springs (which provide 2 inches of lift), a front skidplate constructed of 1/2-inch aluminum, black 18-inch TRD wheels, a TRD dual-outlet exhaust, an instrument panel insert, and red stitching in the interior.

The vociferous exhaust elicited mixed reviews from the judges, some of them loving its assertive burble and others tiring of the resonance while cruising on the highway. Despite getting an update just last year, the Tundra's interior still came across as dated to many, with an over-abundance of hard plastics and lack of soft-touch materials.

Nevertheless, any quibbles about the interior or exhaust faded once it was put

WE LIKE:
Awesome off-road capability and confidence. Sporty note from the TRD dual exhaust. Ample rear seat room.
WE DON'T LIKE:
Exhaust resonance can get tiring over long distances. Dated interior full of hard plastic. Mediocre towing performance compared to other ½-ton.

through its paces off-road. The ample power of the 381hp 5.7L i-Force V-8, combined with the skillfully tuned suspension, made it supremely capable at both high and low-speed off-roading.

However, the singular purpose of the TRD Pro does come with a few trade-offs, the most obvious being a compromise in towing ability and comfort. With our 7,560-pound trailer attached, the rear end sagged considerably more than its ½-ton peers under load. It's nice to see Toyota expanding its Tundra models beyond the standard offerings, but if heading to the great outdoors isn't your thing, this may not be the Tundra you are looking for. **Edward A. Sanchez**

2015 Toyota Tundra TRD Pro

BASE PRICE: \$43,900

PRICE AS TESTED: \$45,000

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 13/18/15

ENGINE: 5.7L iForce DOHC 32V V-8

power @ 5600 rpm
381 hp

torque @ 3600 rpm
401 lb-ft

trans
6 speed auto

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 6.91 seconds

QUARTER MILE: 15.14 seconds @ 92.4 mph

BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 128.53 ft

ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 7.81 seconds*

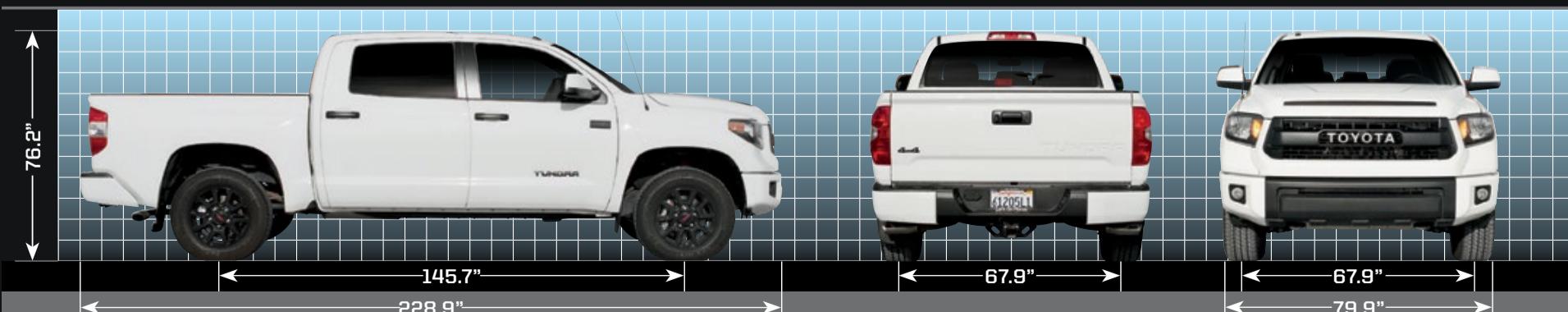
BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 136.65 ft*

ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 14.58 seconds**

WEIGHT: 5,823 lbs

TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 12.93/16.03

*1,000 pounds of payload **7,560-pound trailer weight



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CONTENDER HEAVY-DUTY TRUCK

2014 Ram 2500 Power Wagon

WORKS HARD,
PLAYS HARDER



The Ram 2500 Power Wagon is unlike anything else on the market today. The combination of a flexy suspension, sticky Goodyear tires, front and rear locking differentials, and an electronic disconnecting sway bar make this beast of burden nearly unstoppable off-road.

The Ram 2500 Power Wagon is known across the truck world as a hardcore off-road rig. Unlike its Raptor competitor, which is built for going fast across wide-open desert, the Power Wagon is more at home crawling through a boulder-strewn mountain trail. For '14 the Ram 2500 received a major update, with an all-new frame, suspension, and 6.4L Hemi engine. Naturally, the Power Wagon followed suit, receiving the same new frame along with its own unique suspension. Being the special vehicle it is, the Power Wagon was an extremely late-availability '14 model. So to address the elephant in the room (and stave off some hate mail), the '14 model was eligible for this test because it didn't hit dealers until early 2014, too late to be tested

last year (had we ran a test). As such, the '15 models weren't available yet either, though we've been told the only difference is the addition of hill decent control.

On the highway, the Power Wagon drives like a ½-ton truck. The seating position is up high, proper for a truck this size. Ride quality is outstanding, thanks in part to the new link-coil suspension in the rear and finely tuned Bilstein shock absorbers. The truck's all-new 6.4L Hemi V-8 engine provides plenty of power, while cylinder deactivation attempts to promote fuel efficiency. Due to the unique suspension, the Power Wagon has towing and payload ratings lower than that of its peers. However, when loaded down, it hauls

WE LIKE:
Flexible suspension and great tires make this beast dominate off-road. Vinyl floors are awesome. Proper seating position for a truck.

WE DON'T LIKE:
Step-in height a bit much for some. Even with cylinder deactivation, the 6.4L Hemi is very thirsty. The bedside graphics are a touch loud.

them without the slightest sign of breaking a sweat.

Off-road is where this truck is meant to be. The combination of a flexible suspension, front and rear electronic locking differentials, an electronic disconnecting sway bar, tuned Bilstein shocks, and 33-inch Goodyear tires make this heavy-duty truck wheel more like a Jeep Wrangler Rubicon. Shifting into four-wheel drive is done with a floor-mounted manual shift lever, while the lockers and sway bar are activated with a dial and buttons located on the dash. So if you're looking for fullsize truck capability in a package that conquers almost any terrain, look no further. **Jason Gonderman**

2014 Ram 2500 Power Wagon

BASE PRICE: \$49,145

PRICE AS TESTED: \$56,455

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): N/A

ENGINE: **6.4L** Hemi V-8

power @ 5600 rpm 410 hp	torque @ 4000 rpm 429 lb-ft	trans 6 speed auto
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*1,000 pounds of payload **7,560-pound trailer weight

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 8.71 seconds

QUARTER MILE: 16.43 seconds @ 87.8 mph

BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 132.34 ft

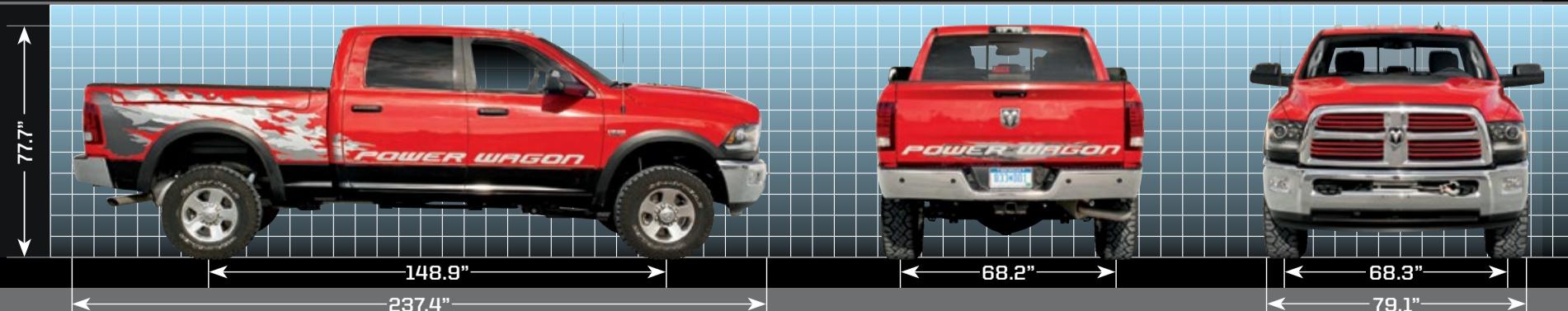
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 9.79 seconds*

BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 139.97 ft*

ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 19.46 seconds**

WEIGHT: 7,301 pounds

TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 11.52/14.79



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CONTENDER HEAVY-DUTY TRUCK

2015 GMC Sierra 2500 HD 4WD All Terrain



IRON FIST IN A VELVET GLOVE

The General Motors HD trucks have long been some of the most civilized and refined in the segment. Our '15 GMC Sierra 2500HD All Terrain certainly made an impression on many of the judges with its combination of capability, refinement, and handsome styling. The '15 models finally complete the refresh process that originally started in '11, when the GM HD trucks got an all-new frame and updated LML Duramax diesel engine. For '15, the trucks got updated bodies that borrowed most of their styling cues from the '14 ½-ton trucks, with proportionally larger grilles and hoods.

The judges were nearly unanimous in their praise for the Sierra's good looks, as well as its refined, feature-packed interior.

Once the undisputed refinement champ among diesel engines, the Duramax is slightly louder than the latest version of the Ford Power Stroke from the outside, but once seated in the Sierra's plush, premium cabin, the interior noise level is about on par with, if not slightly quieter than, the Ford.

Loaded with a 1,500-pound payload, we could barely detect any degradation in the Sierra's acceleration and braking, and hitching it to a 9,560-pound trailer showed its competence and confidence in doing the job it was designed for. As much as most of the judges liked the Duramax diesel and Allison transmission, the latest revision of the Ford 6.7L Power Stroke had a noticeable

WE LIKE:
Modern styling with premium comfort and convenience features. Excellent ride quality for an HD truck.

WE DON'T LIKE:
The low-hanging DEF tank and front air dam concerned drivers and hampered off-road performance. It's noticeably less powerful than its Power Stroke competition.

edge in power and torque over the LML. An updated Duramax is due within the next year or two, and you can bet it will come close to or surpass the Ford's formidable output.

Complaints were few but mostly revolved around some low-hanging components, namely the diesel exhaust fluid (DEF) tank and the low front air dam—a common issue on most GM trucks. Off-road performance got a mixed review from the judges, with some praising it for surpassing expectations and others saying it was too bouncy and nervous. Overall, the Sierra 2500 HD remains a solid choice for those looking for HD capability without the bravado of some of its competitors. **Edward A. Sanchez**

2015 GMC Sierra 2500 All Terrain

BASE PRICE: \$49,310

PRICE AS TESTED: \$64,140

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): N/A

ENGINE: **6.6L** LML Duramax V-8 Turbodiesel

power @ 3000 rpm 397 hp	torque @ 1600 rpm 765 lb-ft	trans 6 speed auto
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*1,500 pounds of payload **9,560-pound trailer weight

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 8.03 seconds

QUARTER MILE: 15.98 seconds @ 86.9 mph

BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 141.46 ft

ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 8.85 seconds*

BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 148.5 seconds*

ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 15.90 ft**

WEIGHT: 7,776 lbs

TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 14.24/21.67



CONTENDER MIDSIZE TRUCK

2015 Chevrolet Colorado Z71

The new midsize Chevy is leaps and bounds more refined than the previous-generation Colorado, not to mention its dated competition. We love the truck's trim dimensions and decent capability.



CHEVY'S NEW MIDSIEZ REINVENTS THE GENRE

The '15 Chevrolet Colorado Z71 is a fantastic truck. Unlike its five-cylinder predecessor (and much of its current competition), the new Colorado is refined and smooth when it needs to be, but it also has a strong dose of truckability and ruggedness in its DNA.

While the GMC Canyon and Sierra look like twins, the Colorado has a very unique identity compared to the Silverado. Some of our judges liked the truck's sporty, wraparound headlights, but some thought it looked a little too much like a crossover. Inside, the Colorado benefits from decent interior plastics and spacious seating front and rear.

WE LIKE:
Quiet interior and composed ride. Towing capacity not far off from its fullsize brethren. Great fuel economy for a pickup.

WE DON'T LIKE:
Frustrating MyLink infotainment. Low air dam and stiff ride off-road. Needs more torque, and that's about it.

With a trailer or payload, the Colorado handles the job without much fuss. The 3.6L V-6 is shared among many GM products (including passenger cars like the Chevy Camaro and Cadillac XTS), so it doesn't produce as much low-end torque as a dedicated truck engine, but it makes great power if you rev it up, with excellent fuel economy coming along for the ride. The Colorado's engine also felt a little torquier than its GMC cousin, and we surmise that this is due to the Colorado's slightly lower curb weight.

As with its Silverado brother, the Colorado suffered off-road to some degree. While it didn't have ground-clearance-destroying side steps, its front air dam was too low and

GM's automatic locking differential acted a bit sluggishly. The stiffly sprung suspension also didn't flex as well as the Tacoma off-road special.

However, that suspension paid dividends in on-road composure. The Colorado rode very nicely in urban and highway environments, and although the seats got a little tiresome after a couple hours, the quiet interior and smooth ride made sure you stayed relaxed and comfortable.

Frankly, we have no major complaints about the Colorado. It's a fantastic little truck that will no doubt put the competition on notice. With its good fuel economy, useful capability, and city-friendly size, the Colorado has made the midsize-pickup market relevant again. **Brett T. Evans**



ACCEL 0-60 MPH:	8.02 seconds
QUARTER MILE:	15.92 seconds @ 89.1 mph
BRAKING 60-0 MPH:	127.64 ft
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD):	8.52 seconds*
BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD):	131.03 ft*
ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING):	15.57 seconds**
WEIGHT:	4,522 lbs
TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST):	17.84/25.19

2015 Chevrolet Colorado Z71

BASE PRICE: \$34,115

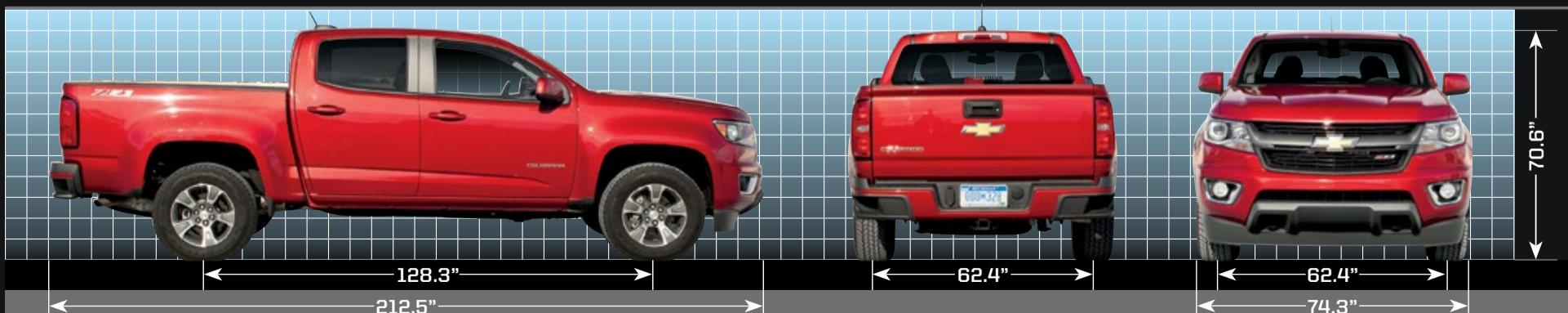
PRICE AS TESTED: \$36,710

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 17/24/20

ENGINE: 3.6L DOHC V-6

power @ 6800 rpm 305 hp	torque @ 4000 rpm 269 lb-ft	trans 6 speed auto
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*500 pounds of payload **4,560-pound trailer weight



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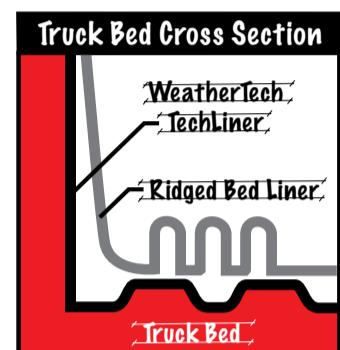


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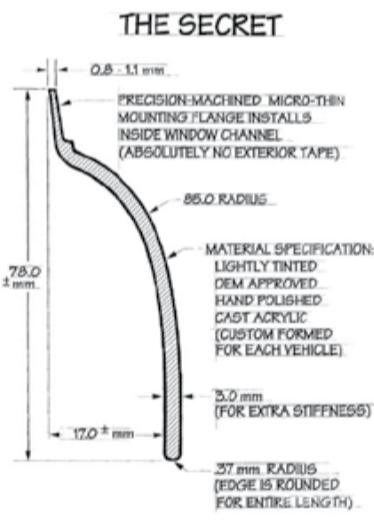
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CONTENDER 1/2-TON TRUCK

2015 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 High Country

THE ULTIMATE
COWBOY CADILLAC



It took approximately five minutes for our staff to deem the Chevrolet Silverado 1500 High Country the luxury car of the group. Its fancy pearlescent white paint was the initial impetus, but as we drove the High Country more and more, it became apparent that luxury describes a lot more about this truck than its color.

The High Country is the top-of-the-line Silverado, meaning this truck came equipped with a 6.2L V-8, a new-for-'15 eight-speed automatic transmission, and every bell and whistle available from the factory. Its interior was undeniably well appointed, featuring navigation, lane-departure warning, a rear-view camera, and some pretty fantastic leather seats. The

exterior sported a chrome grille and unique wheels that most of our judges loved, although it must be said that some of us felt there was a bit too much of the shiny stuff.. A silky smooth ride meant that it was the one everyone wanted for long freeway slogs or trips between dinner and the hotel.

All was not perfect, however. The interior's color scheme is disjointed, featuring lighter brown seats, dark-brown accents, and black panels. Chrome, metallic trim, and wood make an appearance as well. Someone tried a little too hard to make this interior look luxurious. A more subtle approach would have better suited our judges' tastes.

Off-road, the Silverado was completely

WE LIKE:
Best riding truck in the test. Has a great sounding engine and exhaust tone. Seats are big and comfortable.

WE DON'T LIKE:
Transmission tuning needs some refinement. Too low of a stance. Perhaps too much chrome.

The Silverado 1500 High Country was arguably the most comfortable truck in the test, with great seats and a smooth, quiet ride. However, its high price, limited off-road capability, and finicky eight-speed transmission slowed its rise to greatness.

out of its element. The truck's (thankfully removable) low-hanging air dam and side steps caught every rut, rock, and incline on our route. Additionally, the eight-speed transmission bogged shifting into Second on hard acceleration and upshifted aggravatingly early. However, the 6.2L V-8 sounded amazing, and the Silverado got surprisingly good fuel economy.

As equipped, the High Country would make for a perfect ranch truck, one that the boss drives to shows and events, occasionally with a trailer or some gear in tow. However, as equipped, it's too expensive (and too low to the ground) to be relegated to the life of a work truck. **Brett T. Evans**

2015 Chevrolet Silverado 1500 High Country

BASE PRICE: \$50,850

PRICE AS TESTED: \$59,035

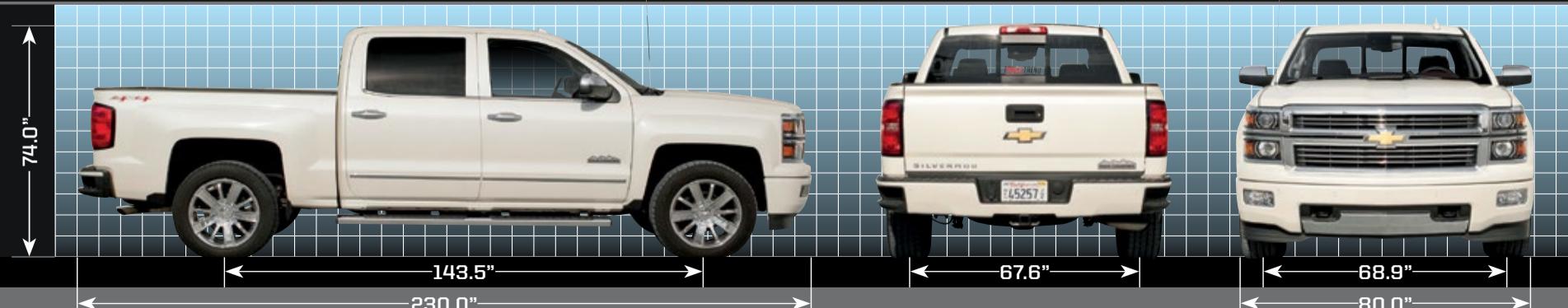
EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 15/21/17

ENGINE: 6.2L ECOTEC3 V-8

power @ 5600 rpm	torque @ 4100 rpm	trans
420 hp	460 lb-ft	8 speed auto

*1,000 pounds of payload **8,560-pound trailer weight

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 6.79 seconds
QUARTER MILE: 14.82 seconds @ 96.8 mph
BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 130.18 ft
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 7.81 seconds*
BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 136.65 ft*
ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 14.58 seconds**
WEIGHT: 5,672 lbs
TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 14.35/21.55



CONTENDER MIDSIZE TRUCK
2015 GMC Canyon SLT



We absolutely love the Canyon's mini-Sierra styling, which gives it the feel of a large truck in a much smaller package. Inside, the real aluminum trim and soft-touch materials provide a truly premium experience.

SIERRA JUNIOR

The all-new GMC Canyon entered the Pickup Truck of the Year competition with some strong credentials. The '15 Canyon is a clean-sheet entry into the midsize segment, which has been dominated over the last decade by the Toyota Tacoma and Nissan Frontier.

Judges liked the Canyon's mini-Sierra styling, giving it a bold, purposeful look. The interior also received positive reviews for premium materials and a design that is significantly better than the competition's dated, hard-plastic interior. The IntelliLink touchscreen interface was relatively intuitive and offered quick access to entertainment

WE LIKE:
Elegant styling inside and out. Nimble, easy-to-drive on- and off-road performance. Excellent fuel economy when cruising the open road.

WE DON'T LIKE:
Wonky transmission programming. Low air dam that compromises off-road performance.

and navigation options.

The 305hp 3.6L V-6 was plenty powerful, but its roots as a car engine showed in its peaky, high-revving power delivery. It was also saddled to a transmission that was constantly seeking the highest gear for maximum fuel economy. However, the unfortunate side effect was Jekyll-and-Hyde throttle response, going from 1,400 rpm to a screaming 5,000 rpm when passing or ascending uphill grades. More sophisticated grade-logic programming with better part-throttle response would rectify the only major powertrain shortcoming in an otherwise excellent package.

Towing the 4,560-pound trailer, the

Canyon remained composed and steady on the road, although under load, the modest 269 lb-ft torque output of the 3.6L engine is accentuated. We can't help but think the 4.3L EcoTec3 V-6 from the Silverado or Sierra might be better-suited to the Canyon.

Even over very rough terrain, there were hardly any squeaks, groans, or rattles in the interior. However, the Canyon's dangerously low front air dam compromised its off-road performance, frequently plowing when going over whoops.

Many of the judges experienced a bit of sticker shock when realizing our well-equipped tester topped the \$40,000 mark. We may not be used to the idea of a \$40k midsize truck, but if any truck is worthy of it, it's the Canyon. **Edward A. Sanchez**



ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 8.57 seconds
QUARTER MILE: 16.06 seconds @ 88.6 mph
BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 124.54 ft
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 8.91 seconds*
BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 123.96 ft*
ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 15.51 seconds**
WEIGHT: 4,591 lbs
TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 18.18/26.00

*500 pounds of payload **4,560-pound trailer weight

2015 GMC Canyon SLT

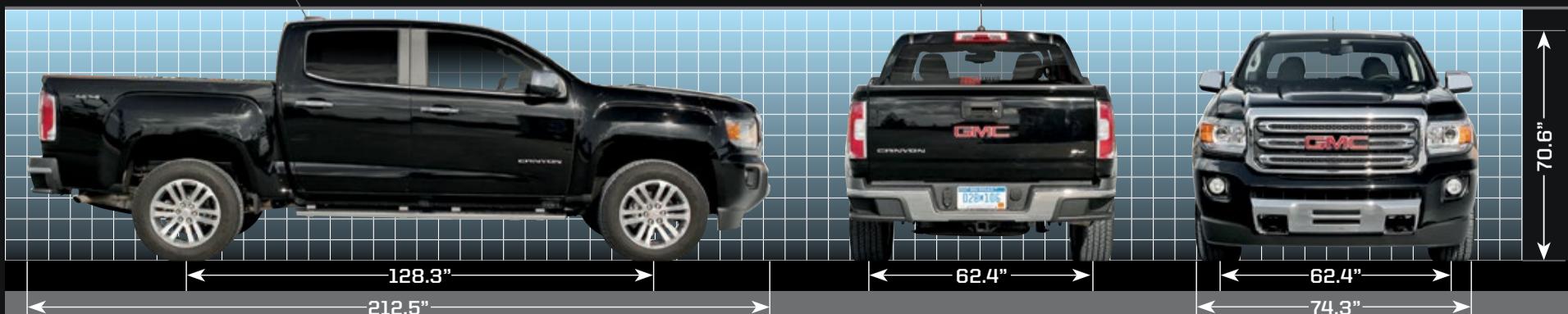
BASE PRICE: \$36,950

PRICE AS TESTED: \$40,465

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 17/24/20

ENGINE: 3.6L DOHC V-6

power @6800 rpm 305 hp	torque @4000 rpm 269 lb-ft	trans 6 speed auto
---------------------------	-------------------------------	-----------------------





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 Ram 5.7L ('03-'12) Part# 33-2247
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*Estimated horsepower and torque gains based on specific or similar vehicle dynamometer tests. Results will vary. For more information, look up vehicle and/or testing protocols at knfilters.com. *57 Series Intakes are 50-State Legal. Intake systems beginning with 63/69/77/RK are street legal in most states. Some of these parts are not legal for use on certain vehicles in California, or other states adopting CA emission standards. Visit us online for CARB status on each part for a specific vehicle.

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"Easy to install. Works great. No water in bed of truck even in heavy rain. Highly recommend this cover."

– Jeffrey S. (Hicksville, OH)

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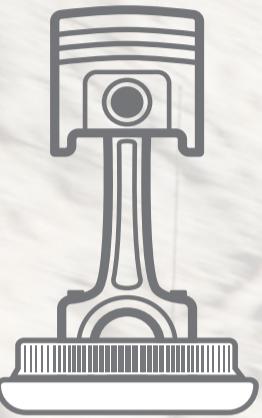
The Roll-X locks for complete cargo security, keeping your gear safe from theft. It also works with all factory accessories and allows use of bed rails, bed extenders, racks and tie downs. Made in the USA.

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2015
TRUCK TRENDS
PICKUP
OF THE **YEAR**





WINNER TAKES ALL

By Jason Gonderman • Photography By Robert Guio

The all-new 2015 Ford F-150 utilizes an innovative all-aluminum body, a first in the segment, in an effort to shed pounds while increasing both fuel economy and capability. Our tester weighed in 465 pounds lighter than the Chevrolet Silverado 1500 and a surprising 616 pounds lighter than the Toyota Tundra.

When the makers of the best-selling pickup for the last 43 years (not to mention best-selling vehicle for 32 years) announce such a radical change, you better believe people take notice. The '15 F-150 is new in almost every way. Two new engine options are available: a naturally aspirated 3.5L V-6 and twin-turbo 2.7L EcoBoost V-6. The truck's frame is new and utilizes more high-strength steel than ever before. And most radical of all, the cab and bed are made entirely of aluminum (with exception of the firewall). The F-150's new frame and body construction yield up to a 700-pound weight reduction, which in this world is simply tremendous.

"THE '15 F-150 EXCELS IN EVERY WAY A TRUCK SHOULD."



Our tester came delivered in a mid-level XLT FX4 trim, with the tried-and-true 3.5L EcoBoost V-6 under the hood. Boasting an impressive 365 hp and 420 lb-ft of torque, the EcoBoost had no trouble propelling our truck. In fact, the F-150 took the top spot in each of our instrumented track tests (0-60, 60-0, quarter mile, 0-60 with payload, 60-0 with payload, and 0-60 with a trailer). And if you wanted to get a bit frisky, she'd burn the rear tires until told to stop.

The F-150's weight reduction for '15 wasn't simply a fuel economy play. With engineers taking that weight out of the truck, consumers are able to place it back in. Both payload and towing capacity have been

increased. When properly equipped, the '15 F-150 can haul 3,300 pounds of payload or tow 12,200 pounds, both of which are best in class. Because of this it was no surprise that when it came time to test these abilities, our judges were thoroughly impressed. The F-150 was able to get the load up to speed quickly and effortlessly, while the built-in trailer-brake controller made slowing down just as effortless.

Taking to the open road, the '15 F-150 is simply amazing. Ride quality has been improved and interior comfort is the best it

has ever been. Rear seat passengers are treated to more legroom than they know what to do with. However, this is offset by the lack of an armrest in back, which made some of our judges a touch grumpy. Ford has stuck to their guns with offering a console-mounted shifter, which divided our panel of experts. Some like it, while others would prefer more storage space and a traditional column shifter. What we could all agree on though was the annoyance at the lack of a selected gear indicator on the console, as has been included on previous generations.

2015 Ford F-150 XLT FX4

BASE PRICE: \$39,425

PRICE AS TESTED: \$50,440

EPA FUEL ECON (CITY/HWY/COMB): 17/23/19

ENGINE: 3.5L EcoBoost V-6

power @ 5000 rpm 365 hp	torque @ 2500 rpm 420 lb-ft	trans 6 speed auto
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*1,000 pounds of payload **7,560-pound trailer

ACCEL 0-60 MPH: 6.40 seconds

QUARTER MILE: 14.67 seconds @ 96.8 mph

BRAKING 60-0 MPH: 117.94 ft

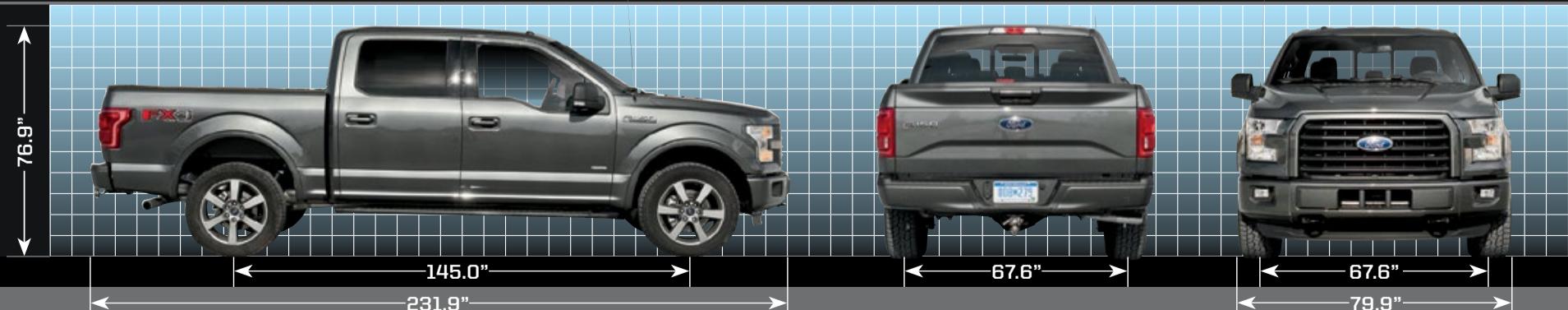
ACCEL 0-60 (PAYLOAD): 6.9 seconds*

BRAKING 60-0 MPH (PAYLOAD): 119.68 ft*

ACCEL 0-60 (TOWING): 13.84 seconds**

WEIGHT: 5,207 lbs

TESTED FUEL ECON (AVERAGE/BEST): 15.46/21.88



WE LIKE:
The rear seat has legroom for days. Power from the 3.5L EcoBoost V-6 is simply amazing. Love that little bit of turbo sound you can hear with the windows down. Tows like there's not even a trailer attached. Ford's initiative to advance progress through new technology.

WE DON'T LIKE:
Where's the rear seat armrest? We wish the FX4 package had a bit more substance, like the any-speed rear locker from Raptor. No gear indication on the shifter. Fuel economy was a touch underwhelming.



Our judges loved the
rear seat legroom but
why no center armrest?

Technology is one area that sets the new F-150 apart from previous generations. The BLIS blind spot monitoring system works flawlessly and includes cross traffic detection when in reverse. Backup sensors have become standard, but what was noticeably missing from our tester was forward facing park sensors. Many of our judges would have liked to see this option. LED lighting is also big on the new truck, both inside and out. Interior lighting has made the move to all-LED, providing a clean, crisp light. In the rear are bed-mounted LEDs, which illuminate

the cargo box. Our one complaint with these is their location: being mounted mid-height in the bed means they were easily obscured by cargo. LED puddle and auxiliary lights are mounted in the side mirrors, intended to replace the need to use headlights when setting up after dark on the job or camp site.

The '15 F-150 has no problem tackling the terrain once the pavement ends. Our XLT was equipped with the FX4 package, which includes a selectable electric locking rear differential, skid plates, and fancy stickers. Overall, our judging staff was pleased with

the truck's capabilities off-road. Low ground clearance and street-oriented tires hampered performance slightly but not enough to garner any complaints. Whether you're hauling dirt bikes, driving back roads to your favorite hunting spot, or battling a winter storm, this truck won't let you down.

Fuel economy was one of the last areas that we tested. Throughout the course of the test we logged every gallon used, and we dedicated an entire day to highway driving. We feel this gives us a true and accurate reflection of real-world fuel economy. With an average of 15.46 mpg and a best tank of 21.88 mpg, no one was disappointed; however, once the results for the other ½-ton came in and were the same or better, our opinion was deflated.

At the end of the week of testing, it was clear which truck had come out on top. Our panel of expert judges was in agreement, and the scoring data backed it up. Ford has hit a home run with their new pickup. The '15 F-150 excels in every way a truck should. It effortlessly tows a trailer and drives just as well with a payload as without. Highway ride is phenomenal, and off-road, it's pretty dang decent. The 3.5L EcoBoost truly does perform like a V-8, with power delivery that is smooth and consistent. And the amount of technology in this pickup, from the high-strength steel frame and aluminum body construction to the electronics and safety features, is simply astounding.

It is with great excitement that we declare the '15 Ford F-150 our 2015 Pickup Truck of the Year. **TT**

We liked the new F-150's sleek styling. We especially loved the LED accent lamps in the rear light assembly, which looked contemporary and modern.





THE JUDGES' PICKS

Jevery manufacturer is building trucks to increasingly higher standards, making it quite hard to pick a favorite. With our testing complete and after each driver seat was given a thorough workout, each judge

was posed the question of which truck they wouldn't mind having in their own driveway. Since competition in the truck market is at an all-time high for performance, comfort, towing, and technology, picking a truck to take home is becoming

more and more difficult. Ultimately, if you went to the dealership today and purchased any one of these trucks, you wouldn't be disappointed. Read on to see which truck each of our team of experts would choose to take make their own.



SEAN P. HOLMAN

CONTENT DIRECTOR – TRUCK TREND NETWORK

In a test filled with winners, choosing one to fill up a space in my own driveway is a difficult proposition. I have been a huge proponent of revitalizing the midsize segment, which the GM cousins do an admirable job of. However, if I needed one truck to do it all for my personal needs, the **Ram Power Wagon** is hard to pass up.



JASON GONDERMAN

EDITOR – TRUCK TREND

I'm having a very hard time choosing which truck I would let live in my driveway. Being a big fan of hitting the dirt and venturing off-road, I'd lean towards the Power Wagon or TRD Pro Tacoma if I were looking for a part daily driver, part weekend toy. Overall, however, I'd have to pick the **Ford F-150** to make my own. It has enough power to tow the toys I already have and plenty of room for friends inside, and it gets pretty solid fuel economy to boot.



TREVOR REED

STAFF EDITOR – DIESEL POWER

I not only wanted to take home the **GMC 2500HD All Terrain** for the weekend, I considered ripping out the OnStar—Tony Soprano-style—and running away with the truck. I could change my name, start a new life hauling gravel, and not have to worry about making payments on a \$60,000-plus truck. Eventually, I'd probably slip up and take it in for service and the VIN would send a red flag to someone at GM headquarters. Helicopters would be dispatched to drop lawyers to wrestle the keys from me, but I wouldn't give up without a fight.



COREY SIMONE

PRODUCTION EDITOR – TRUCK TREND NETWORK

The truck that I would take home today would be the **Ford F-350 Super Duty**. The power, comfort, and drivability of this truck make this an easy decision. The visibility, light steering feel, and power that the diesel engine puts down can easily make you forget you're driving a 1-ton truck, until you have to park it.



ANDY MOCK

SENIOR ART DIRECTOR – TRUCK TREND

What can I say? I love midsize pickups and the **GMC Canyon** fits the bill perfectly. The styling, interior refinement, and capability all add up to a great truck. While struggling over which contender to take home, the decision all came down to fitting my lifestyle. That back seat in the F-150 though...



BRETT T. EVANS

STAFF EDITOR – TRUCK TREND NETWORK

Based purely on emotion and not on logic, I'd like to take home the **Toyota Tacoma TRD Pro**. As the only truck in this test available with four-wheel drive and a manual transmission, it's basic but lots of fun. Plus, it was the most versatile off-roader in our group, with maneuverable proportions and a well-sorted suspension.



MONICA GONDERMAN

EDITOR – 8-LUG / WORK TRUCK REVIEW

Being a GM person, it kills me to say it, but I would take home the **Ford F-150**. I like the new look, the ample cabin space, and the off-the-line "pep." It just feels comfortable and quiet to drive, both on and off road. The F-150 isn't the segment's bestseller by accident, and I have confidence in the arguably bold direction Ford has taken with its ½-ton pickup.



ED SANCHEZ

CONTENT SPECIALIST – TRUCK TREND NETWORK

My take-home choice would be the **GMC Canyon**. Living in a suburban townhouse with a small garage, a fullsize truck simply doesn't fit in my life. Besides that, the primary use would be for a daily commuter, with occasional towing and hauling. That said, I'm holding out for the diesel model coming for '16.



DAVID HAMILTON

INTEGRATED ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE – TRUCK TREND NETWORK

I would gladly park the **Ford F-150** in my driveway. With a kick-ass 3.5L EcoBoost engine, all-new aluminum body, and a comfortable and tech-friendly interior, it's hard to beat. The turbo V-6 tows like a big V-8 too!



46.3L
TOTAL ENGINE
DISPLACEMENT

**4,139
LB-FT**
TOTAL TORQUE

55
TOTAL
TRANSMISSION
GEARS

1
MISSING
ARM REST

53,297 LBS
TOTAL WEIGHT OF
TRUCKS TESTED

7,482
TOTAL MILES
DRIVEN

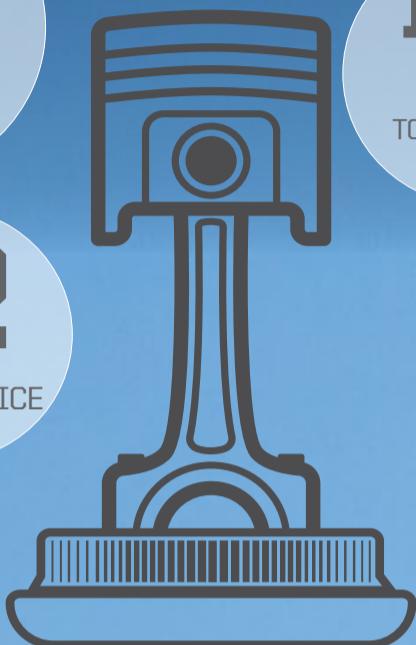
**1,730
LBS**
TOTAL WEIGHT
OF JUDGES

MANY
POUNDS OF BEEF
CONSUMED

1
TOTAL
TRUCKS
STUCK IN
MUD

42
TOTAL
POUNDS OF ICE
USED

36
TOTAL
PENS LOST



68
TOTAL
CYLINDERS

**8.34
MPG**
WORST SINGLE
TANK

495
TOTAL HOURS
DRIVING

1
U-HAUL
THEFT
WITNESSED

3,259
TOTAL HORSEPOWER

28
TOTAL MONSTERS
CONSUMED

187 FT
LONGEST
BURNOUT

36
TOTAL
CARWASHES

\$459,005
TOTAL COST OF
TRUCKS TESTED

628
TOTAL JUDGING
BOOK PAGES



SPECIFICATIONS AS TESTED

ALL THE NITTY-GRITTY DETAILS



VEHICLE/MODEL	CHEVROLET COLORADO Z71	CHEVROLET SILVERADO 1500 HIGH COUNTRY	FORD F-150 XLT FX4	FORD F-350 KING RANCH	GMC CANYON SLT
BASE PRICE (INCL. DESTINATION)	\$34,990	\$52,045	\$44,785	\$64,030	\$37,875
PRICE AS TESTED	\$36,710	\$59,035	\$50,915	\$68,460	\$40,465
ENGINE					
TYPE	DOHC 24-valve gas V-6, aluminum block/heads	OHV 16-valve gas V-8 with cylinder deactivation, aluminum block/heads	DOHC 24-valve gas V-6, aluminum block and heads	OHV 32-valve diesel V-8, compacted graphite iron block, aluminum heads	DOHC 24-valve gas V-6, aluminum block/heads
DISPLACEMENT (C/LITER)	218/3.6	376/6.2	213/3.5	409/6.7	218/3.6
BORE X STROKE (IN)	3.70 x 3.37	3.78 x 3.6	3.64 x 3.45	3.90 x 4.25	3.70 x 3.37
COMPRESSION RATIO (:1)	11.5	11.5	10.0	16.2	11.5
INTAKE/FI	Naturally aspirated, direct injection	Naturally aspirated, direct injection	Twin-turbocharged, direct injection	Single sequential turbocharged and intercooled, common-rail injection	Naturally aspirated, direct injection
MFG.'S POWER RATING @ RPM (HP)	305 @ 6,800	420 @ 5,600	365 @ 5,000	440 @ 2,800	305 @ 6,800
MFG.'S TORQUE RATING @ RPM (LB-FT)	269 @ 4,000	460 @ 4,100	420 @ 2,500	860 @ 1,600	269 @ 4,000
MFG.'S SUGGESTED FUEL TYPE	Regular unleaded	Premium unleaded	Regular unleaded	Ultra-low sulfur diesel	Regular unleaded
DRIVETRAIN					
TRANSMISSION	6-speed automatic	8-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic
AXLE RATIO (:1)	3.42	3.23	3.31	3.55	3.42
TRANSFER CASE	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement
FRAME/BODY	Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Aluminum body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body on steel ladder frame
SUSPENSION					
FRONT	Short- and long-arm independent, coil-over gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar	Short- and long-arm independent, coil-over gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar	Double-wishbone independent, coil-over gas-charged shocks,	Rigid axle, twin coil springs, gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar	Short- and long-arm independent, coil-over gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar
REAR	Rigid axle leaf, gas-pressurized shocks, electronic limited-slip differential	Rigid axle leaf, gas-pressurized shocks, electronic limited-slip differential	Rigid axle leaf, gas-pressurized shocks, electronic locking differential	Rigid axle leaf, gas-charged shocks, electronic locking differential	Rigid axle leaf, gas-pressurized shocks, electronic limited-slip differential
STEERING					
TYPE	Electric power rack-and-pinion	Electric power rack-and-pinion	Electric power rack-and-pinion	Hydraulic power recirculating-ball	Electric power rack-and-pinion
BRAKES					
FRONT (IN)	12.2 x 1 vented rotor	13 x 1.18 vented rotor	13.8 x 1.34 vented rotor	14.3 vented rotor	12.2 x 1 vented rotor
REAR (IN)	12.75 x 0.7 solid rotor	13.6 x 0.79 vented rotor	13.7 x 0.79 vented rotor	14.3 vented rotor	12.75 x 0.7 solid rotor
ABS	Four-wheel	Four-wheel	Four-wheel	Four-wheel	Four-wheel
WHEELS/TIRES					
WHEELS (IN)	17 x 8	20 x 9	20 x 9	20 x 9	18 x 8.5
TIRES	Goodyear Wrangler All-Terrain Adventure, P255/65SR17	Goodyear Eagle LS2, P275/55SR20	Hankook Dynapro, P275/55SR20	Michelin LTX, LT275/65SR20	Goodyear Wrangler, P265/60SR18
DIMENSIONS/CAPACITIES					
WHEELBASE (IN)	128.3	143.5	145	156	128.3
OVERALL LENGTH (IN)	212.5	230	231.9	246.8	212.5
OVERALL WIDTH (IN)	74.3	80	79.9	79.9	74.3
HEIGHT (IN)	70.6	74	76.9	80.8	70.6
TRACK F/R (IN)	62.4/62.4	68.9/67.6	67.6/67.6	68.3/67.2	62.4/62.4
MINIMUM GROUND CLEARANCE (IN)	8.2	8.9	9.4	8.5	8.2
TURNING DIAMETER, CURB-TO-CURB (FT)	41.3	47.2	47.8	51.8	41.3
APPROACH/DEPARTURE ANGLES (DEG)	17.3/22.1	17.9/23.3	25.5/26.0	19.3/20.8	17.3/22.1
BREAKOVER ANGLE (DEG)	19.8	19.0	21.0	19.2	19.8
GVWR (LB)	6,000	7,200	7,000	11,500	6,000
PAYOUT (LB)	1,590	1,740	2,020	4,050	1,550
MAXIMUM TOWING CAPACITY (LB)	7,000	11,800	10,700	14,000	7,000
SEATING	5	5	5	5	5
FUEL CAPACITY (GAL)	21.0	26.0	23.0	37.5	21.0



GMC SIERRA 2500HD SLT ALL-TERRAIN	RAM 2500 POWER WAGON	TOYOTA TACOMA TRD PRO	TOYOTA TUNDRA TRD PRO
\$60,695	\$50,340	\$38,300	\$45,000
\$64,410	\$56,455	\$38,300	\$45,000
OHV 32-valve diesel V-8, cast-iron block/aluminum heads	OHV 16-valve gas V-8 with cylinder deactivation, cast-iron block/aluminum heads	DOHC 24-valve gas V-6, aluminum block and heads	DOHC 32-valve gas V-8, aluminum block and heads
403/6.6	392/6.4	241/4.0	345/5.7
4.06 x 3.90	4.09 x 3.72	3.70 x 3.74	3.70 x 4.02
16.8	10.0	10.0	10.2
Turbocharged and intercooled, direct injection	Naturally aspirated, multi-port injection	Naturally aspirated, multi-port injection	Naturally aspirated, multi-port fuel injection
397 @ 3,000	410 @ 5,600	236 @ 5,200	381 @ 5,600
765 @ 1,600	429 @ 4,000	266 @ 4,000	401 @ 3,600
Ultra-low sulfur diesel	Regular unleaded	Regular unleaded	Regular unleaded
6-speed automatic	6-speed automatic	5-speed automatic	6-speed automatic
3.73	4.10	3.73	4.30
Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, mechanical engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement	Part-time 2-speed, electronic engagement
Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body / Steel ladder frame	Steel body / Steel ladder frame
Independent torsion-beam, coil-springs, gas-pressurized shocks, stabilizer bar	Rigid axle, coil-sprung, Articulink, gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar with electronic disconnect, electronic locking differential	Independent, coil springs, gas-charged shocks	Independent double-wishbone, coil springs, remote-reservoir shocks
Rigid axle leaf, gas pressurized shocks, electronic limited-slip differential	Rigid axle coil-sprung, gas-charged shocks, stabilizer bar, electronic locking differential	Rigid axle leaf, remote-reservoir shocks, electronic limited-slip differential	Rigid axle leaf, remote-reservoir shocks, electronic limited-slip differential
Hydraulic power recirculating-ball	Hydraulic power recirculating-ball	Hydraulic power rack-and-pinion	Hydraulic power rack-and-pinion
13.98 x 1.57 vented disc	14.2 x 1.5 vented disc	12.48 vented disc	13.9 x 1.26 vented disc
14.17 x 1.34 vented disc	14.1 x 1.34 vented disc	10.0 drum	13.6 x 0.71 vented disc
Four-wheel	Four-wheel	Four-wheel	Four-wheel
18 x 8	17 x 8	16 x 7	18 x 8
Goodyear Wrangler SR-A, LT265/70R18	Goodyear Wrangler Duratrac, LT285/70R17	BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO, P265/70R16	Michelin LTX A/T, P275/65R18
153.7	148.9	127.4	145.7
239.5	237.4	208.1	228.9
80.5	79.1	74.6	79.9
78.2	77.7	70.1	76.2
68.8/67.3	68.3/68.2	63.0/63.4	67.9/67.9
9.65	14.3	9.3	10.6
51.5	47.7	40.8	44.0
18/23	33.6/26.2	37.8/25	26.0/22.0
19	23.5	20	19.1
10,000	8,510	5,500	7,200
3,501	1,492	1,250	1,630
13,000	10,800	6,400	9,800
5	6	5	5
36	31.0	21.1	26.4

Testing trucks is hard work. Our staff of nine expert judges were hands-on with every aspect of our 2015 Pickup Truck of the Year, including all of the manual labor involved. All the sweat pays off with a more intimate knowledge of each truck.





HOW WE SCORE IT

Cour Pickup Truck of the Year scoring procedure utilizes six weighted categories. The breakdown is as follows: 20 percent Highway Performance (vehicle handling, ride quality, steering feel, NVH, etc.), 20 percent Towing and Hauling (how the vehicle reacts with a trailer weighted to 75 percent of its rating and a

specified payload), 20 percent Off-Road Performance (evaluating each vehicle's performance and off-road-centric features such as traction aids, tires, and four-wheel-drive system operation in a specific off-highway environment), 20 percent Interior and Exterior styling (instrumentation, ingress and egress, seat comfort, storage, appearance, stance, material

choice), 15 percent Empirical Data (loaded and unloaded acceleration, braking, and quarter-mile; weight, pricing, and fuel economy), and 5 percent Daily Living (passing power, parking prowess, ease of use of technology). Each judge votes on the individual categories (excluding Empirical) and total scoring is averaged and normalized.

FINAL RESULTS

	FORD F-150	GMC CANYON	SILVERADO 1500	CHEVY COLORADO	GMC SIERRA	RAM POWER WAGON	TOYOTA TUNDRA	FORD F-350	TOYOTA TACOMA
HIGHWAY	17.07	16.58	16.51	16.53	16.56	15.44	14.98	15.64	14.27
TOWING & HAULING	17.38	15.89	16.02	15.80	16.89	15.67	13.69	17.42	12.84
OFF-ROAD	15.71	15.73	14.11	15.64	14.93	18.51	17.78	14.76	17.80
INTERIOR & EXTERIOR	16.84	15.91	16.22	15.09	17.18	16.07	14.33	14.91	13.53
EMPIRICAL	12.41	9.95	10.91	10.64	7.09	6.00	9.82	6.27	8.18
DAILY LIVING	4.51	4.08	4.20	3.99	4.10	3.59	3.58	3.97	3.66
TOTAL	83.92	78.14	77.98	77.69	76.75	75.28	74.17	72.97	70.28



Combining the disciplines of towing, hauling, off-roading, track testing, and highway driving into one week led to many early mornings and late nights for our judges. However, on the plus side, everyone got plenty of time to practice hitching trailers.



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URBAN SLAYER

CHEVY'S NEW SMALL SUV IS ON-TRACK AND CITY SMART

By Sue Mead

Chevrolet has jumped into the compact-crossover market in the U.S. with its recent introduction of the all-new '15 Chevrolet Trax. The Trax has become a popular offering in Chevrolet's global portfolio in over 66 markets since it was introduced in 2012 as a result of the world's increasing demand for small SUVs. It's a market that's expected to grow to more than 2 million in the next few years. In America, the growth of this segment is estimated to increase by over 80 percent, with an expected six new entries by 2016. Chevy points out that it has introduced seven new small-sized vehicles over the past four years, and the city-smart Trax is one of its highlights.

What you'll notice from the outside is the Trax's tall-hatchback looks that are reminiscent of the Chevy Equinox. The



front end is accented with Chevy's signature dual-port grille and swept-back headlights, with chrome accents along the aerodynamic body. Fog lamps, roof rails, power sliding sunroof, and heated power-adjustable side mirrors are available as well. The Trax sits on a 100.6-inch wheelbase and has a planted and wide stance, with a 60.6-inch front and rear track. These dimensions not only bring an urban-runabout feel to the driving experience but also a tight 36.7-feet turning circle that enhances maneuverability and nimbleness in congested urban environments and helps make the Trax easy to park. A standard rearview camera helps here as well.

The Trax is powered by GM's ECOTEC 1.4L turbocharged engine that produces 138hp at 4,900 rpm and 148 ft-lbs of torque at 1,850 rpm and is matched to a six-speed automatic transmission. Chevy claims the combination



Sharing a platform with the Buick Encore and the European-market Opel Mokka, the Trax is styled to resemble the larger Equinox crossover.

will get the Trax to 60 mph in 9.2 seconds. Front-wheel drive is standard, with available all-wheel drive that enhances performance and adds confidence in slippery conditions. The automatically engaging system seamlessly splits torque between the front and rear wheels, when needed, to increase traction.

Our drive of the new Trax was filled with urban adventures that were designed to illuminate how the Trax is going to stand out in this emerging segment. One motoring route took us out of San Diego, California, along beach roads, parks and sports areas, where we saw a demonstration highlighting the storage capacity of the Trax with a surfboard and other athletic gear tucked in the cabin with the front passenger seat folded. During this 50-mile-long drive and a second 30-mile drive through a downtown cityscape, we tried out a number of the gizmos and gadgets that make the Trax a motorized entertainment system on wheels.

Slipping on and off of busy freeways and navigating through heavy traffic, we appreciated the responsive handling, good steering, and compliant suspension. Engineers have

used a MacPherson-strut front suspension system and a compound crank rear that make for impressive driving agility. Up front are coil springs, a large stabilizer bar, and side-load-compensated front strut modules, bringing ride comfort and sporty, direct responsiveness. The rear torsion beam setup incorporates gas-charged twin-tube shocks that provide a number of advantages, including minimal space requirements, low weight, and good control for the backend of the vehicle when motoring and carrying loads. Noise-damping urethane spring isolators help reduce noise and make a quieter cabin on the roadway. All models feature a fuel-saving column-mounted electric power steering system (EPS) that helps save fuel by drawing energy only when the steering wheel is turned. The EPS's feel is light, yet direct, and enhances the vehicle's maneuverability, particularly at low speeds and during parking.

The Trax is a comfortable, competent offering with an agreeable price and overall inoffensive persona. We expect to soon see these charming compact SUVs swarming everywhere, from the suburbs to city centers. **TT**



2015 Chevy Trax LTZ AWD

BASE PRICE: LS \$20,995, LT \$22,445, LTZ \$25,030

PRICE AS TESTED: \$28,305

ENGINE: **1.4L** ECOTEC Turbocharged DOHC VVT I-4

power @ 4800 rpm	torque @ 1850 rpm	trans
138 hp	148 lb-ft	6 speed auto

OVERALL LENGTH: 168.4 in

CURB WEIGHT: 2,805 lbs

FUEL CAPACITY: 14 gallons

EPA MILEAGE RATING: 26 city / 34 highway



The Trax shares many of its interior styling elements from the Sonic subcompact, including the pod-like gauge cluster and the touchscreen display.



MAKING A STATEMENT

EDGY STYLE FOR EMPTY NESTERS

By **Edward A. Sanchez**

Crossovers may not be the most interesting or passion-stirring automotive conveyances, but there's no disputing their importance in today's automotive market. It seems like just about every automaker has one in showrooms or on the drawing board, ranging in price from less than \$20,000 to well into the six figures. So when one of the originators of the genre came around to redesigning its crossover icon, it made a sharp focus on its core target market and listened carefully to its current owners. The result is the '15 Nissan Murano, with an edgier and more youthful design than ever before, but ironically, it's designed to appeal to perhaps the brand's oldest crossover and SUV demographic group.

Youthful Appearance, Mature Marketing

Like many significant automotive designs in history, the new Murano's styling is somewhat polarizing. For those of you who

remember, the first-generation Murano also made a similarly bold styling statement for its time, something Nissan wanted to capture with the new design.



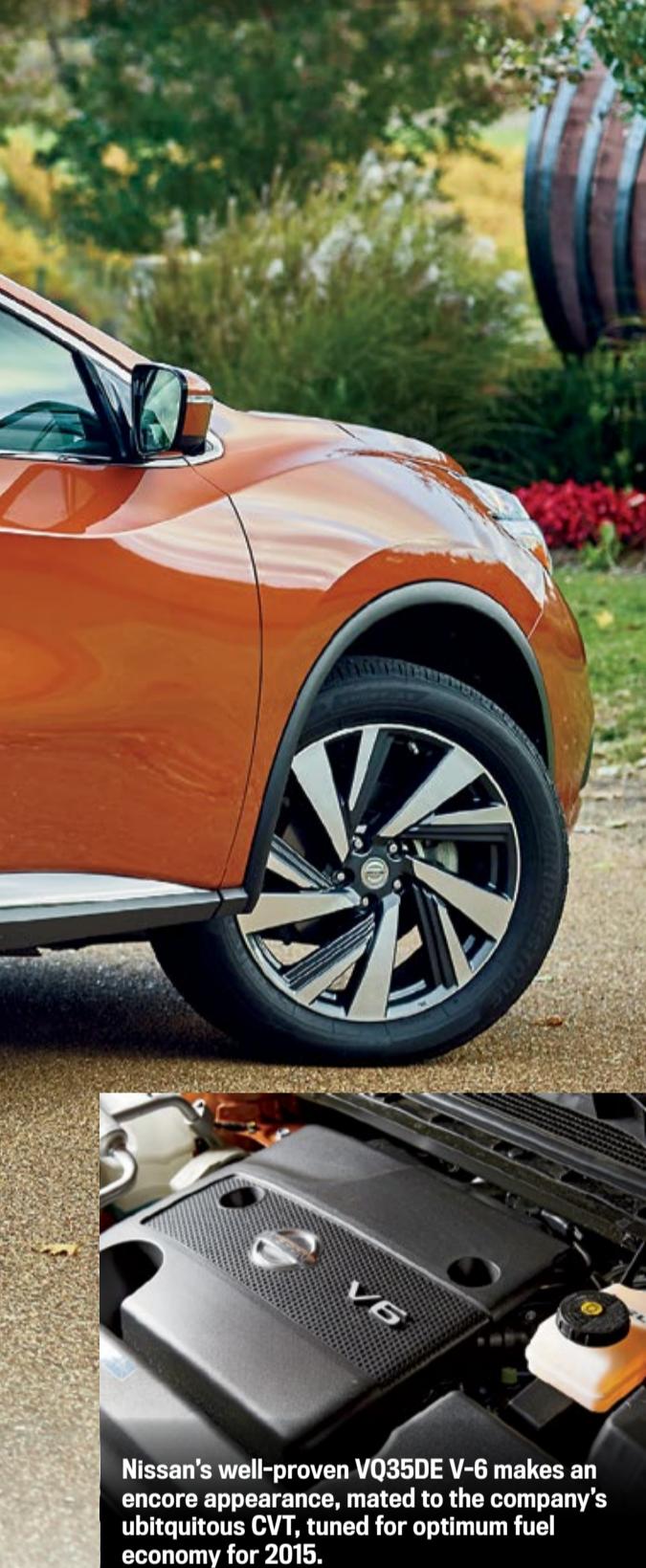
If the goal was to make the Murano lean and athletic for a midsize crossover, we can say without a doubt it succeeded visually. Despite being longer and wider than its predecessor, the Murano looks smaller on the road, thanks to dynamic styling that borrows liberally from the Resonance concept that debuted at the 2014 Detroit Auto Show.

On the inside, the Murano has a light, modern, contemporary feel, with rounded, curved surfaces, and premium, but not opulent, materials. The light woodgrain in our top-spec Platinum model wasn't quite convincing as a proxy for cellulose but looked appropriately clean and class appropriate.

Proven, But Perfected Powertrain

In terms of driving experience, it's a refined evolution of the Murano's proven formula, which is (as it has been since the first-gener-

While not as radical as the exterior, the interior of the '15 Murano packs plenty of features into a cleanly styled cabin.

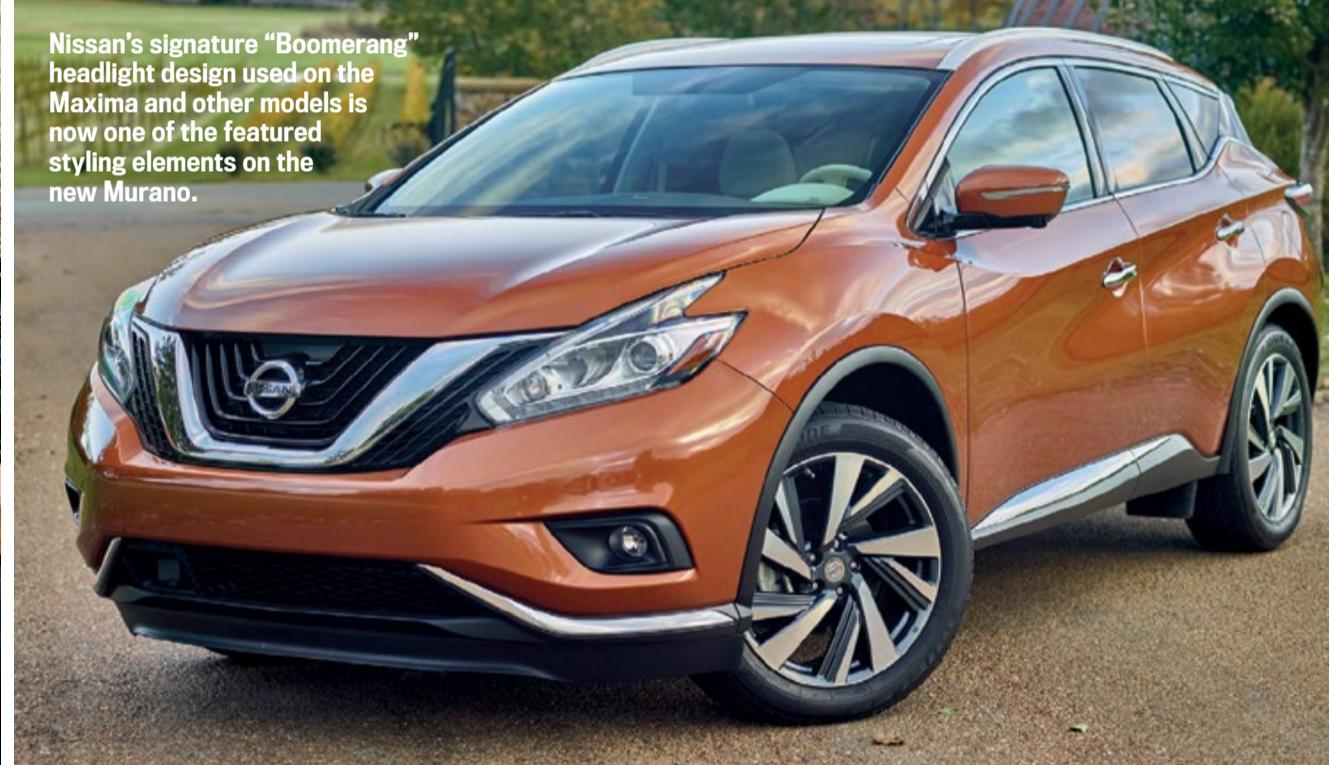


Nissan's well-proven VQ35DE V-6 makes an encore appearance, mated to the company's ubiquitous CVT, tuned for optimum fuel economy for 2015.

ation model) Nissan's proven VQ35DE V-6 mated to a continuously variable transmission (CVT). Although output is unchanged from the '14 model, fuel economy improves by a significant margin. While CVTs are generally everyone's favorite transmission to hate, Nissan has gotten the formula down pretty well, with seamless, smooth operation at part-throttle and surprisingly crisp and conventional-feeling "shifts" in more aggressive driving. Used as it is in the larger and heavier Pathfinder, the 3.5L V-6 has no trouble motivating the Murano. Figure on a 0-60 time in the low 7-second range and the quarter-mile in the mid-15s.

The '15 Murano is a worthwhile and substantial update to a modern-day icon and offers plenty of style, function, and features to appeal to buyers shopping the class, whether

Nissan's signature "Boomerang" headlight design used on the Maxima and other models is now one of the featured styling elements on the new Murano.



Despite targeting 40 and 50-something empty nesters, the Murano is being marketed as a "social lounge," with special attention paid to rear seat accommodations.

2015 Nissan Murano

BASE PRICE: \$30,445

VEHICLE LAYOUT: Front-engine, FWD/AWD, 5-pass, 4-door SUV

PRICE AS TESTED: \$41,485

ENGINE: 3.5L DOHC 24-valve V-6

power 260 hp	torque 240 lb-ft	trans CVT auto
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CURB WEIGHT: 3,790-4,017-lb

WHEELBASE: 111.2 in

0-60 MPH (EST): 7.2 seconds

EPA CITY/HIGHWAY FUEL ECON: 21/28/24 mpg

they're empty nesters on a wine-tasting road trip or younger, upwardly mobile urbanites looking for a practical all-arounder. **TT**



Multiple Personalities

A BIGGER, MORE PREMIUM, AND MORE MODERN SORENTO

By Sue Mead

The redesigned '16 Kia Sorento is more capable and classy than ever, with increased towing capacity, more room for passengers and gear, and a new turbocharged engine. Also notable are upgraded materials and features, a stronger body structure, NVH reduction, and added driving confidence to support the active-adventurer lifestyle CUV owners covet. Sorento buyers have their choice of three engines, including a new 2.0L turbocharged four-cylinder and two returning engines: a 3.3L V-6 and an improved 2.4L inline-four. It comes with two or three rows of seats, in front-wheel drive or all-wheel drive, and in L, LX, EX, SX, and SX-L trims. Kia is targeting the Jeep Grand Cherokee and Toyota Highlander in particular as its competitors, and the company says the Sorento is the first CUV to offer Harman's Clari-Fi digital music reconstruction technology.

The '16 model is a departure from the first-generation Sorento that was a traditional truck-based, body-on-frame SUV and arrived in 2002 as a capable off-roader with an automatic four-wheel-drive system featured low range gearing. After updates in '07 and '08, the second-generation '10 Sorento came to market in 2009 with unibody construc-

tion; it was Kia's first model to be built in America. Like its predecessor, the '16 model is constructed at Kia's West Point, Georgia's assembly plant.

The Sorento's more aggressive and aerodynamic profile is enhanced by a large, upright grille, a sloping hood, brawny shoulders, a 3.1-inch longer wheelbase and 0.2-inch

wider body that improves interior roominess. The narrower headlight design bears a family resemblance to the all-new, highly praised Sedona and is an evolution of the upper fascia seen on the Cross GT concept shown at the Chicago Auto Show, in 2013.





Under the hood, the base 2.4L GDI engine makes 185 hp and 178 lb-ft of torque, the 3.3L GDI achieves 290 hp and 252 pounds of twist, and the 2.0L turbocharged inline-four produces 240 hp and 260 lb-ft of torque. All are mated to an electronically controlled six-speed automatic featuring Sportmatic shifting. Sorento's advanced AWD system automatically routes power to the wheel with the most traction. A 4WD Lock Mode is onboard to split engine power evenly between the front and rear driveshafts when needed during more aggressive traction situations. The system also bundles the stability of Torque Vector Cornering Control when yaw and steering sensors detect unwanted understeer.

Up front, the Sorento's revised suspension geometry and steering system result in a



The '16 Sorento marks the 2.0L turbocharged I-4's first appearance in a Kia crossover.

quick and agile behind-the-wheel feel. Rack-Mounted Motor Driven Power Steering (R-MDPS) features direct mounting of the electric motor on the steering rack, enhancing steering response and improving handling, as well.

Notable attributes from our day-long drive in the '16 Sorento include great turbo response that comes on quickly, a quiet, upscale cabin, and a lighter, more nimble feel to motoring, thanks in part to the combination of its stronger body structure, longer wheelbase, modified platform, and upgraded suspension and steering.

The '16 Sorento is more diverse than ever, with enough options to make almost anyone happy. Overall, it's one seriously well-rounded crossover and sure to be huge hit in its competitive set. **TT**

2016 Kia Sorento SX-L

PRICE AS TESTED: \$40,795

VEHICLE TYPE: 5 or 7-passenger SUV

ENGINE: **2.0L** 4-cylinder turbo

power 240 hp	torque 260 lb-ft	Sportmatic trans 6 speed auto
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CURB WEIGHT: 3,878 lbs

OVERALL LENGTH: 187.4 in

FUEL CAPACITY: 18.8 gal



The '16 Kia Sorento's interior utilizes the kind of premium materials that you used to find only in luxury cars. The fit and finish is superb, and NVH has been improved.



RAM PROMASTER'S MINI-ME SHRINK RAY

By G.R. Whale

WE had previously argued Apprentice was a more appropriate name, but as occasionally happens, Ram ignored our argument and went with ProMaster City (PMC). The only difference between this strategy and Chevrolet's City Express is Chevy putting City ahead of the full-size progenitor and Ram after it—ProMaster City sounds like a nickname for the plant.

Fortunately, this Class 1 van is better than the name. It boasts the usual selection of bragging rights like base engine power, gears, payload, and enough measurements to satisfy an airline bent on carry-on revenue, yet it drives quite well. The rear suspension pays dividends, and the level of refinement should be appreciated by hurried couriers and harried parents alike.

Of course, we drove white ones—lots of white ones—and a red one to ensure its relative speediness was merely a law enforcement

perception. There's also a very good chance yours will be black inside as well. The driving position is clearly more car-like compared to the upright NV200, and the tilt/telescoping wheel wasn't overtly lacking adjustment range. Taller individuals may find rearward

seat travel limited with the cargo partition, but your 6-foot-plus correspondent fit fine for 20-30 minute jaunts.

You don't see most of the City's hood from behind the wheel, only the curved inward pillar bases—like GM's old "Dustbuster"





Based on the European-market Fiat Doblo, the ProMaster City has a car-like driving position.

minivans—and huge expanse of open space above the windshield betray the commercial background. If you get rear windows, the larger one includes a wiper, and the remote-manual (power on SLT) mirrors have fixed wide-angle elements that show the rear tire-curb interface. With park sensors and a camera, you can easily park it millimeters from the loading dock.

The City runs a 2.4L SOHC MultiAir2 four-cylinder and nine-speed automatic like the Cherokee, with preliminary power ratings of 178 hp at 6,400 rpm and 174 lb-ft at 3,800 rpm. However, the PMC uses the shortest Cherokee axle ratio of 3.73:1 and smaller, lighter tires, so it sets off better. Ram says this market is all about 0-30 mph, and the PMC's throttle response is just shy of abrupt—chirping the tires is easy and spinning them requires little effort, and with some cargo or a trailer attached, there is some torque steer to go with it.

That short gearing gives the PMC a much livelier feel than the NV200's CVT or the 2.5L Transit Connect: The former has gearing, the

latter power, but neither have both (no 1.6L turbo Ford was handy). Mopar's been tinkering with a 210hp tuning pack for the 2.4L in cars, but there's no word if you'll be able to hot-rod your van.

We never drove one more than 50 percent loaded, and despite its ability to carry 50 percent of its own weight, we never found the empty ride punishing at all. In fact, it could be better than many $\frac{1}{2}$ -tons that can carry

2015 Ram ProMaster City

PRICE AS TESTED: \$24,125

VEHICLE TYPE: Class 1 commercial van (cargo/wagon)

ENGINE: 2.4L 4-cylinder, SOHC

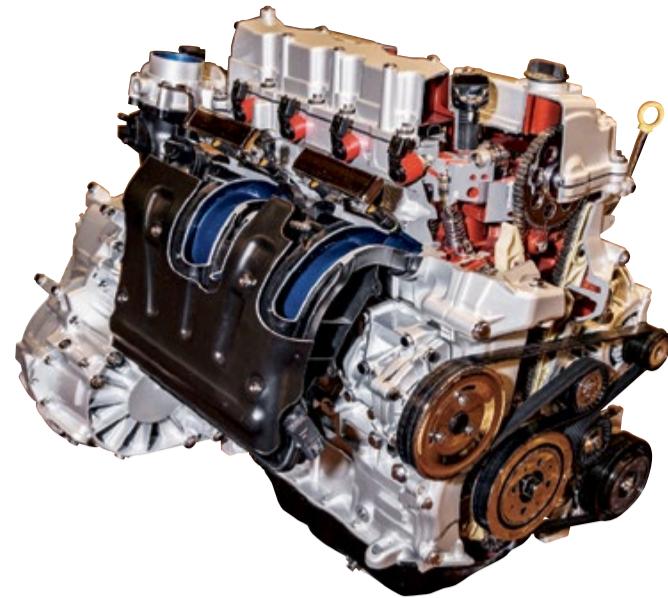
power 178 hp	torque 174 lb-ft	trans (948TE) 9 speed auto
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OVERALL LENGTH: 187.5 inches

CURB WEIGHT: 3,512 lbs (cargo) / 3,695 lbs (wagon)

FUEL CAPACITY: 16 gal

EPA MILEAGE RATING: 21/29/24 (city/highway/comb)



that much because it's a unibody design. Our expectation is that full-load mileage will decline notably (for reference, our towing rig was about 600 pounds shy of the 5,900-pound GCWR) and the ride may not match a fully loaded $\frac{1}{2}$ -ton.

What struck us the most was the relative refinement and isolation. Every empty box is a rattle can waiting to happen, and you can hear the rear brakes in any of them, but ProMaster City was solid and tight when empty, loaded to 50 percent, or towing 75 percent of rated. It also seemed quieter and didn't need as much phone volume, removing one fatigue factor for commercial operators and making the wagon version a realistic alternative to a two-wheel-drive cute-ute.

Only fleet operators in gray polyester slacks get excited about working vans, but this one does work, and if you have a big dog or need cargo space more than all-wheel drive, it's very viable alternative to a CUV. I don't think Sergio Marchionne will be imitating The Donald and telling anyone, "You're fired," over this vehicle. **TT**



The ProMaster City's front cabin was extensively redesigned with North American customers in mind, with higher-quality materials and a more modern control interface.

FIRST LOOK | 2017 Ford F-150 Raptor

**READY TO TAKE ON
THE APOCALYPSE**



RAPTOR



By Brett T. Evans

True to the earlier rumors about Ford's 2015 North American International Auto Show debuts, the company showed off its all-new '17 F-150 Raptor, and it looks even more brutal than the original Raptor.

Foremost among the changes for the new Raptor is its construction. The standard F-150's "military-grade" aluminum body makes the jump to the Raptor. Bodywork is substantially altered from its work-spec sibling, allowing for the wider stance. Sitting under the 6-inch-wider body is a frame that was purpose-built for the Raptor, using more high-strength steel than last year's SVT in a continued effort to help shave weight and add strength. The beefed-up frame should help the Raptor avoid damage when doing what it was built to: eating up high-speed off-road trails.

The '17 Ford F-150 Raptor promises to build on the legendary performance of its predecessor with a distinctly high-tech approach.



The Raptor's performance should be out of this world. Thanks to its unique construction, the '17 model weighs about 500 pounds less than the outgoing pickup, and Ford says it will be more powerful as well. It has been assumed that an EcoBoost engine would power the new Raptor for a while now, and Ford has now confirmed just that. The company didn't release power or torque ratings at the show, only saying that it would make more than the outgoing Raptor's 411hp, 434-lb-ft 6.2L V-8. Since then, company execs were overheard saying that this 3.5L EcoBoost would produce 450 hp, so we expect a commensurate bump in torque as well. That makes us giddy, especially since the new Raptor is lighter than the old one.

Helping that massively powerful V-6 stay in the meat of its powerband (while increasing efficiency as well) will be an all-new Raptor-exclusive 10-speed automatic transmission. The gearbox will route power to



IT LOOKS LIKE IT COULD TAKE ON A ZOMBIE HORDE OR THE BAJA 1000 WITH EQUAL EASE.

the Raptor's 35-inch BFGoodrich All-Terrain T/A KO2 tires through a new four-wheel-drive "torque-on-demand" transfer case, which Ford says combines the best attributes of clutch-driven all-wheel drive and traditional, mechanical-locking four-wheel drive. The system will allow for 2-High, 4-High, 4-Low, and all-wheel-drive modes. The Torsen front differential and any-speed rear locker remain, providing additional traction, particularly when scrambling up rocky or slippery grades.

The company's Terrain Management System comes standard in the '17 Raptor, with six preset modes for everyday driving: performance on-road driving; rain, snow, and ice; mud and sand; high-speed off-road driving; and low-speed rock crawling. Switching between these modes selects different calibrations for the truck's powertrain, driveline, anti-lock brakes, traction control, and stability control for ideal performance in those conditions.

The high-output EcoBoost V-6, 10-speed transmission, larger shocks, and all-new four-wheel-drive system promise to exceed the impressive performance of the first-generation model.



The '17 Raptor's interior features Ford's all-new Sync 3 touchscreen interface and a pair of beefy-looking and comfortable front buckets.



Ford has updated the suspension on the new Raptor as well. New Fox Racing Shox come with custom internal bypass technology that will dampen and stiffen the suspension to prevent bottoming out over rough terrain. Additionally, the front and rear shock canisters have grown in diameter from 2½ to 3 inches, providing better performance and durability when driving near the limit. The upgrades have increased suspension travel over the '14 Raptor's 11.2 inches up front and 12 inches at the rear. Ford also says the

shocks have been retuned for better low-speed compliance.

Of course, no discussion on the Raptor would be complete without addressing its meaty, Mad-Max-esque styling. It's still instantly recognizable as a Ford F-150, with pencil-thin LED signature lights front and rear. The F-150's upright, hexagonal grille shape makes the transition to the high-performance truck as well, although the outgoing Raptor donates things like clear-

ance lights and bold "FORD" script to the new one's visage.

Well-integrated flared fenders provide coverage for the huge, meaty 35-inch rolling stock (with more clearance lights front and rear), and the tailgate is sculpted as well, with the Ford script spanning the width between the taillights. Ford only showed photos of the extended-cab Raptor, which, like before, comes with the company's shortest bed for maximum maneuverability. It's a polarizing design, but it looks like it could take on a zombie horde or the Baja 1000 with equal ease.

On sale late next year, the new Raptor looks like it picks up where the old SVT-branded truck left off. Ford's claims of increased power, suspension travel, off-road capability, and on-road refinement add up to a very compelling package, and we're sad we have to wait more than a year to shake one down. It should be a very talented, fun-to-drive truck, and we're looking forward to learning more as it gets closer to production. **TT**



REINVENTING

**MIKE CAIRNS, DIRECTOR
RAM TRUCK ENGINEERING**

By Gary Witzenburg

A car guy almost from birth, Mike Cairns was born and raised in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, and earned his mechanical engineering degree from Western Michigan University in 1985. He went to work for Chrysler two weeks out of school, and in 1991, he added an MBA from Wayne State University.

It didn't hurt that he grew up with a father working for Chrysler. "I was always into whatever dad was bringing home," he says. "When I got my driver's license, I bought a '65 Ford Thunderbird and went to work on it. I had taken auto shop in high school and made friends with some other gearheads, so we all learned about automobiles wrenching on each other's cars. It was a lot of fun."

His first job was in impact test and development, with passive restraints and air bags. "I was there from the genesis of the first airbag program at Chrysler, doing the tests, analyzing the results, and deciding the next steps. For a young engineer, that was awesome." From that beginning, Cairns rose through the Chrysler Engineering ranks, eventually to this job in 2008.

TT: What is your product philosophy?

MC: Number one is assessing customers' needs, wants, and desires. You have to meet your customers' needs and make them happy.



One of the strengths of our team is that our Ram product-planning group and my group work side by side. We're friends; we hang out together; and we do research together.

Your truck share has more than doubled since the creation of your Ram brand in 2009. Why are your trucks doing so well

and stealing sales from competitors?

Before our split of Ram brand, we were not shopped or even considered by a vast majority of truck buyers. Dodge trucks were perceived as a Third place, discount, maybe lower quality, and we couldn't get anybody to even come in and look at them. The 2009 Ram program was hatched in the

**"BEFORE OUR SPLIT OF RAM BRAND,
WE WERE NOT SHOPPED OR EVEN
CONSIDERED BY A VAST MAJORITY
OF TRUCK BUYERS."**





Ram's newest offering, the ProMaster City compact cargo van, hopes to boast more capability than its competition.

old company by guys who had risen to top management ranks at Chrysler, namely Scott Kunselman (who had my job at the time), Joe Veltri, and Ralph Gilles. They did a lot of research. They determined that to get customers to come in and shop us, we needed some dramatic changes, and they pushed really hard for the right things. We needed some unique features and to be better than the other guys.

The biggest thing was the link coil rear suspension. One of the wants we saw in the market was that people were using them more as personal vehicles and wanted them smoother and quieter with better ride and handling, so that was a clear winner. They also invented the side-storage Ram Box. Both of those were to attract people to our dealers to check out our trucks. And Ralph Gilles did a brilliant job on the styling. It's a beautiful truck, and we did a big upgrade in the interior.

We got a lot of accolades when we launched it, but our timing could not have been worse—right into the teeth of the recession. And there were a lot of concerns about where Chrysler would end up, so we still were not getting many shoppers. Then we stood the Ram brand out; we had a huge improvement in advertising and marketing; and we worked with the dealers to improve sales training and service. Bob Hegbloom instituted customer advocates who go out and train the dealers.

Then in 2013, we made more major upgrades, brought in more innovations

Innovation is what has kept Ram moving forward at a blistering pace. The '14 Ram Power Wagon, seen here at its introduction, is just one example.

(including air suspension and the Uconnect system), and upgraded the interior again, plus a big focus on fuel economy with our Pentastar V-6 coupled with the eight-speed transmission for 25 mpg highway. Then we followed that up the next year with the EcoDiesel, which is getting phenomenal acclaim and sales.

Has the name change helped in changing the image?

Without question. I was skeptical at first because I love Dodge trucks, but it made a profound difference internally, because we had dedicated people doing trucks, not Dodge people doing cars and trucks. And I think externally it has helped us break free of the old Dodge truck that was tough and durable but cheap and inexpensive and not top-quality.

The rear coil springs are great for unloaded ride, but don't they sacrifice some capability?

There is absolutely no limitation to payload or towing, zero compromise of capability, due to coil springs. The spring rate is key, and we could have set that to be anything we wanted for the payload we wanted. The only reason we have not gone after best-in-class towing or payload in the ½-ton market is because our customers do not ask for that. Our trucks go up to a 10,600-pound tow rating, but if you're towing a trailer over 10,000 pounds, you should be buying a heavy-duty truck. It's a better tool—the right tool for the job.

Ford is doing aluminum-body F-150s, and GM has their new midsize pickups. Will all truck makers eventually go to smaller trucks, aluminum bodies, and light-duty pickup diesels to meet CAFE?

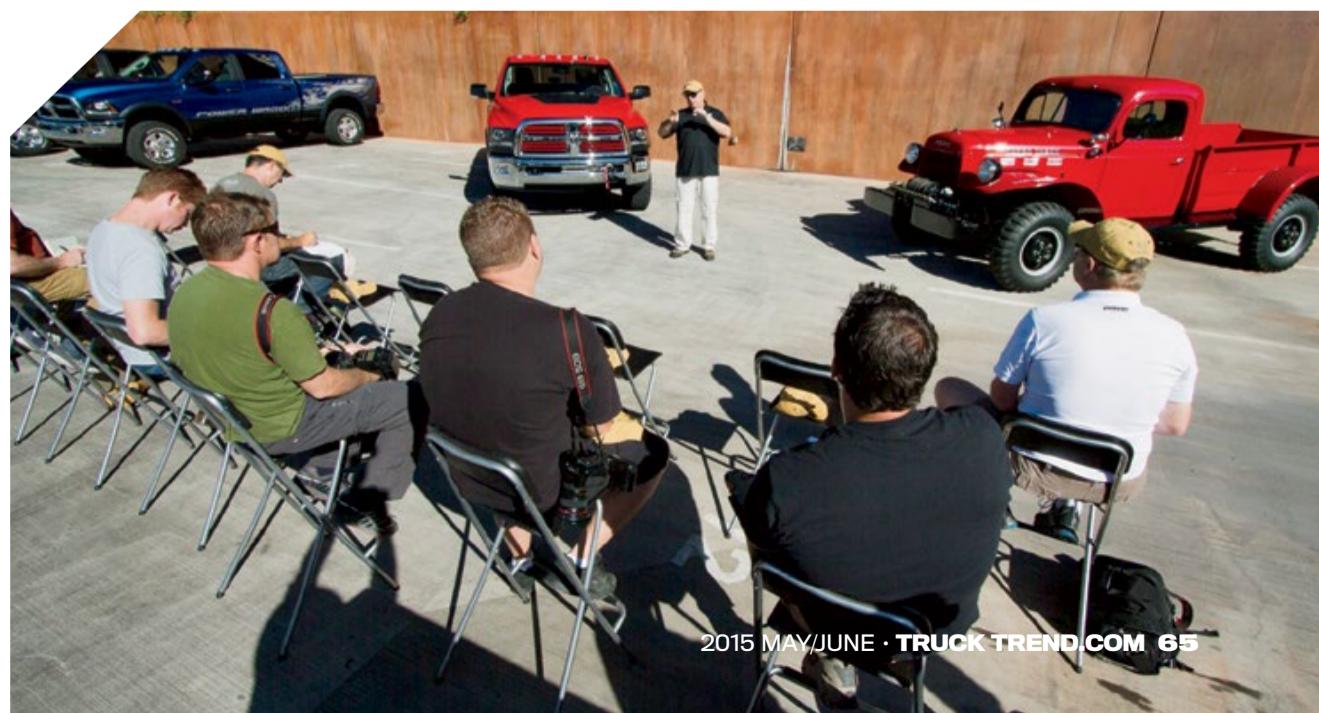
It is interesting that each of us has gone in a different direction. Weight is certainly a big part of vehicle efficiency, and we're all working on weight reduction, but you don't have to go all aluminum to get there. Aluminum can be a good solution in the right places, but there are also a lot of great solutions in high-strength steel that we are looking at and working on. You also need powertrain efficiency, and aerodynamics is a very big piece, and we have best-in-class aero.

What are you most proud of with the Ram program?

The reputation and the sales success, which are tied together. The reputation of the Ram brand is to the point where our competitors are benchmarking us, and we've enjoyed tremendous sales success.

Anything you would do differently?

Probably number one is that we had talked about doing a diesel several years before we did and couldn't quite get a business case figured out, so I wish we had done that earlier. What made it work was the partnership with Fiat and the combined program with the Grand Cherokee, which helps spread the development cost over two programs instead of just one. **TT**





By Lazelle Jones

MINTMALLY INVASIVE LUXURY

TOURING THE NEBRASKA
CORN FIELDS IN STYLE



The Roadtrek E-Trek is the ultimate stealth motorhome, with styling that doesn't look much different than an airport shuttle.

It's true: both Johnny Carson and the entire Corps of Discovery slept here; however, the opportunities for discovery when poking around the northeast corner of Nebraska go far beyond that. Following blue-line highways and graded-gravel back roads that lace this area of America's Heartland, our ride and accommodations would be the new E-Trek, a Class B Motorhome by Roadtrek. With a '15 E-Trek at hand and with a lust to discover

under-explored places, our sights were set on the northeast corner of the Cornhusker State.

Built on a Mercedes Sprinter 3500 (dualie) platform, the 3.0L turbocharged V-6 diesel engine comes married to a five-speed automatic transmission. The E-trek is designed to transport seven and sleep four, with a private residential-style bath (marine-style toilet, full shower, lavvy) and a U-shaped rear sofa converts into a king or two single beds. The front four seats (two in the cockpit and two mid-coach) make up into single beds. The full-service galley includes a cooktop, refrig-

erator, sink, solid-surface counter, microwave/convection oven, and cabinets. A table can be set up in the rear of the coach or up front, where four can sit down to dine when the cockpit seats are facing aft.

This Class B motorhome is designed to be minimally invasive to the environment, but this has been done without sacrificing the luxuries and comforts associated with the RV lifestyle. Equally important is that the systems and technologies used to achieve this are transparent to the end-user. The E-Trek consumes only diesel fuel (no propane





or auxiliary gen-sets). Eight 6V deep-cycle batteries and a 5,000-watt inverter power everything electrical (roof AC, induction cook-top, refrigerator, and lighting). Heating and hot water is provided by a closed-loop diesel-fired boiler system by Webasto that's augmented by engine heat. In cold weather, the Webasto system can be used to preheat the 3.0L V6 Mercedes engine. At idle, the Mercedes engine drives a 3.5kW generator for use during stand-alone RV camping. A second 5.5kW generator (also engine driven) charges the eight house batteries while driving over the road. Thirty-amp shore power service makes it so the E-Trek can be enjoyed in the most upscale of RV campgrounds. Checking fuel economy on two occasions, the first number (under steady-state operating conditions with the chassis air conditioner running) came in at 19.8 mpg. The second calculation came in at 19.3 mpg, which is very respectable for a large (11,030-pound GVWR) Class B motorhome.

Geared Up For Adventure

Where the meandering Missouri River defines the boundaries between Nebraska,

Iowa (to the east), and South Dakota (to the north), the opportunities to wander are endless. On the Nebraska side of the "Wide Missouri," Lewis and Clark made camp more than a dozen times, a fact folks here are proud of and one that has garnered Nebraska

Roadtrek Mercedes-Benz 3500 Sprinter

BASE PRICE: \$130,468

PRICE AS TESTED: \$145,761

MODEL: E-Trek

ENGINE: 3.0L Diesel V-6

power 188 hp	torque 325b-ft	trans 5 speed auto
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AXLE RATIO: 3.92:1

ALTERNATOR: 220 amps

BATTERIES: 2 chassis / 8 house

INVERTER: 5,000 watts

GROSS VEHICLE WEIGHT RATING: 11,030 lbs

FUEL CAPACITY: 26 gal

FRESH WATER CAPACITY: 33 gal

GRAY WATER CAPACITY: 24 gal

BLACK WATER CAPACITY: 10 gal

Here in "Middle America," the rich history of the East meets the pioneer spirit of the West, while paying homage to its indigenous roots.

a unique place in early American history. And almost as famous as Lewis and Clark (maybe not quite) is the iconic late night talk-show host Johnny Carson, who grew up here in the town of Norfolk. A personality who ruled late night television for decades, Carson is remembered by the millions who were soothed at the end of each busy work day by the words, "Heeeeeere's Johnny!"

Prior to Lewis and Clark (and Johnny Carson), the Pawnee and Sioux inhabited the region, followed by trappers and mountain men, and after Lewis & Clark by pioneers, ranchers, and more recently, corn and soybean agri-magnates. All have written a chapter to this rich history. This is a landscape laced with wineries and breweries, fine- and folk-art galleries, museums, heartland comfort foods, dramatic landscapes and waterways, and small towns where motion pictures are filmed. To boot, the area is a huge draw among outdoors sportsmen and recreationalists. Suffice it to say, the folks who today live here work as hard as their forefathers did to make the place the cornucopia it is. **TT**

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- Monitors & logs vehicle functions
- On screen boost gauge
- Color touch screen, 7 buttons
- Programmable LEDs
- Windshield mount included

INTUNE HANDHELD TUNER:

- Preloaded performance tunes
- Logs vehicle functions
- Do it yourself installation
- Color touch screen
- Checks and clears DTCs
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COVER IT UP!



REVITALIZING YOUR TRUCK'S BED

Words and Photos By **Jason Gonderman**

Your truck's bed is undoubtedly the pinnacle of its utility. Sure, a truck can tow a trailer, but more often than not, a pickup's most useful attribute is hauling a load, be it 1,000 pounds of cinder block, a new washer and dryer, or your family's bikes to the beach. Why, then, is it the most overlooked (and often abused) part of the truck?

While the industry as a whole is getting better about it, most trucks sold today still do not come with any kind of bed protection. The status quo for many years has been the plastic drop-in liner. However, these aren't always secure (ever see one by the side of the highway?), and as they shift and rattle over

time, they can wear away at the bed surface as if there was nothing protecting it at all. Spray-in liners are also a popular choice, but a permanent one. So what can you do if you want to protect your new truck's bed or spruce up your old one without all the negative side effects? This is where the BedRug enters the game.

BedRug utilizes closed-cell foam that is non-abrasive so it won't scratch your bed surface or the goods you're hauling. It's attached using hook-and-loop fasteners, and it can be removed, leaving no sign it was ever there. The $\frac{3}{4}$ -inch foam padding also protects both your bed and cargo from impacts, and it's soft on knees when working

Tonneau covers not only provide covered lockable storage but have also been proven to increase fuel economy by up to 10 percent. Folding covers add another level of usability over the more traditional solid models.

in the bed. It's also chemical resistant and can be washed with a pressure washer with no ill effects.

It's no secret that people are keeping their trucks longer, so we chose to use an '07 Ford F-150 as our test bed for the BedRug. While we were at it, we also added a tri-fold hard tonneau cover from Extang. Whether you want to protect your cargo from the elements, improve your truck's fuel economy, or enhance its looks, a tonneau cover makes a great addition. We chose the Encore Tonno from Extang for its tri-fold utility, secure hard fiberglass build, and its ability to be easily removed when larger items need hauling.

Overall, we're extremely happy with the



1



2



3



4



5

results thus far. Our old used-and-abused truck bed looks new again, and we're not only able to haul goods out of the elements but the truck has a fantastic new look. So whether you're protecting a new truck bed from the start or freshening up an old one, this is one modification that we can happily recommend.

SOURCE

BedRug
800-462-8435
www.bedrug.com

Extang
800-877-2588
www.extang.com

1 Truck beds get used and abused, at least that's what they are designed and intended for. And if you've left your bed naked or had a drop-in plastic liner, your before pic likely looks like this, or worse. Fortunately, it's never too late to spruce it up.

2 The first step installing a BedRug liner is to give the bed a thorough wash. Once clean and dry, the factory tie down hooks should be removed (if they are removable).

3 BedRug ships in two pieces, the floor and sides. Assembly is as simple as flipping the two pieces upside down on a flat surface and zipping them together.

4 Securing the unit to the bed is done with the use of high-strength 3M hook-and-loop fasteners. The BedRug has one side of the fastener sewn into the liner, and it provides markings that indicate where to attach the other half.

5 With the two parts zipped together and fasteners in place, the BedRug is ready to be installed in the bed. It's important to not remove the adhesive covering from the hook-and-loop fasteners until the BedRug is fully fitted into the pickup box.

6 If your truck has removable tie down points, like ours does, the BedRug should come premarked where you need to punch a hole for the bolts to pass through. We used a Phillips screwdriver to locate and punch the needed holds. An awl will work equally as well.

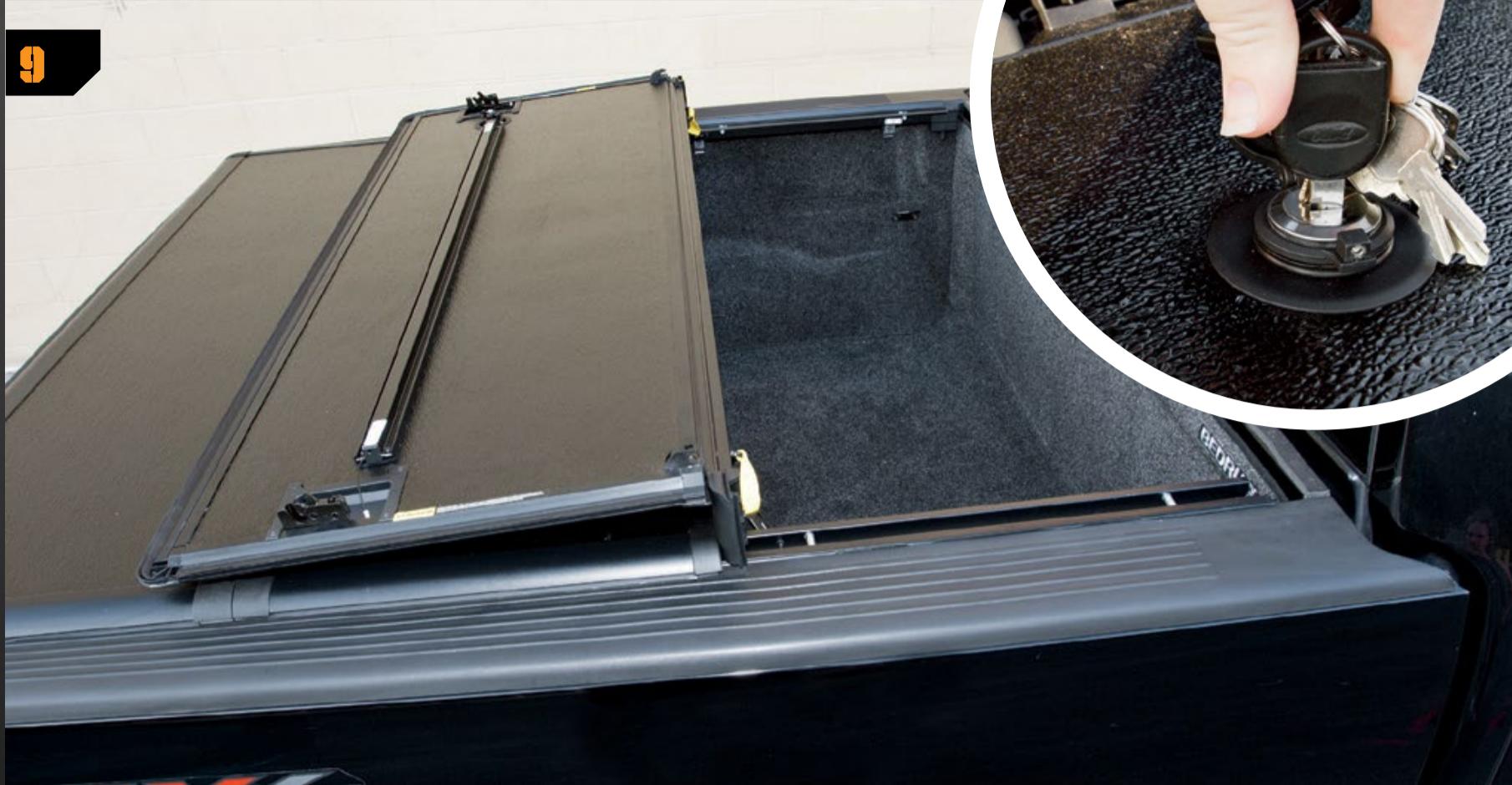
7 Once the liner has been fit into place, the adhesive backing can be removed from the hook-and-loop fasteners and the unit secured to the bed. The folks at BedRug have done a great job of ensuring that the liner fits perfectly and fasteners land in the appropriate spots.

8 With the BedRug secured, we moved on to installing our Encore Tonno cover. Installation is simple and is completed by attaching two metal rails to the factory bedrail by way of aluminum clamps. Each of the three clamps is tightened to 10 ft-lbs with a $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch socket driver.

9 One of the awesome features of the Encore Tonno is the ability to open the front panel independently of the rear, perfect for those times when you need to reach something stored at the front of the bed. Also included with this feature is a lock that utilizes Bolt technology to allow the user to key the lock the same as their truck. Setting the lock is a snap and is accomplished by inserting your ignition key and turning, but be careful: You can only set the lock once, so be sure to use the correct key.

10 Once installed, the Encore Tonno's good looks are rivaled only by its utility. Accessing the bed is done by simply opening the rear two panels. If something large is in need of hauling, these panels can be secured with an attached strap and buckle, allowing you to drive with them in the open position. Need your whole bed open? Don't worry: The entire assembly removes just as easily as it installs, with no tools and in about two minutes. **TT**



9**10**

THE GARAGE

ON THIS PAGE LONG-TERM TEST FLEET
UPDATE: NISSAN ARMADA AND JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE

SHOP CLASS P76
ELECTRONIC STABILITY CONTROL

UPDATE



LONG-TERM NUMBERS

Report: 2 of 4
Previous Report(s): Mar./Apr. '15
Base Price: \$52,860
Price as Tested: \$55,945
Miles to Date: 7,182
Miles Since Last Report: 2,771
Average MPG (this report): 13.84
Best Tank (mpg): 16.49
Worst Tank (mpg): 11.29
Test Maintenance: Oil change, tire rotation, windshield washer fluid refill
Test Problem Areas: None

2014 NISSAN ARMADA PLATINUM RESERVE

By Jason Gonderman

We've said it before and it needs to be said again: this thing is a road trip machine. In the time since our last report, we've clicked off a majority of the miles on our '14 Nissan Armada on the open road. Everybody that rides in or drives the Platinum Reserve comments on its amazing ride quality and comfortable interior. Driver fatigue is a near non-issue, and if it weren't for fuel stops and bio breaks, one could conceivably cruise forever.

While we do have our complaints, they

are all relatively minor so far. The front and second row seats are equipped with seat heaters, which work great. However, the switchgear used to activate the heaters is a simple toggle. This isn't so much a problem as it's an annoyance when the heaters get inadvertently left on (front seats) or turned on (rear seats).

In our last report we noted the faux ignition key. If you're not familiar, the Armada uses a keyless fob system, similar to most new cars and SUVs on the market. However,

LOGBOOK QUOTES

"The seat heaters work amazingly well! But the rocker switches to activate them often lead to forgetting to turn them off and unexpected roasted bums."

"Weather alerts from the navigation system are fun at first, but they tend to get annoying after a while. However, traffic alerts are spot on."

"Don't order the tow mirrors unless you plan to tow often: They are actually quite difficult to use in daily driving."

instead of the now-familiar push-button ignition, Nissan chose to use a knob in place of the key. That's fine, except several of our testers have inadvertently reached for both the four-wheel-drive selector and the volume dial instead of the ignition. Their proximity to one another lends itself to this embarrassing mistake.

Speaking of the fob, we also have a bone to pick with the keyless door unlocking system. Each front door handle has a button on it, and when the fob is within a certain distance, pressing this button is supposed to unlock the doors. When this feature works it's great, but the doors only unlock about 50 percent of the time. With so many good systems on the market, we wish this could be improved.

During our first report period the Armada averaged 13.83 mpg in mixed driving. Proving extraordinarily consistent, during this second period we've averaged 13.84 mpg. Our best highway tank this time around netted 16 mpg, still well below the 18-mpg EPA highway rating. We'll keep trying.

For the next report we're going to hitch up a trailer and test out the Armada's 9,000-pound tow rating, and hopefully get it a bit dirty to stretch its four-wheel-drive legs. Overall, we're still extraordinarily pleased with the vehicle's comfort and performance. The complaints we have are all pretty minor in the grand scheme of things—thus far anyway.





LEGENDS P78
PETERBILT

GEAR P80
COOL, NEW STUFF



PRE OWNED P82
2005-2009 LAND ROVER LR3



UPDATE

Those who tow multiple styles of trailers will appreciate the integrated 4- and 7-pin connectors.



LONG-TERM NUMBERS

Report: 2 of 4
Previous Report(s): Nov./Dec. '14
Base Price: \$46,195
Price as Tested: \$54,780
Miles to Date: 10,050
Miles Since Last Report: 4,865
Average MPG (this report): 23.09
Test Best Tank (mpg): 27.48
Test Worst Tank (mpg): 19.64
Test Maintenance: 10k Service: Oil Change, Tire Rotation, Electronic Updates
Test Problem Areas: None

2014 JEEP GRAND CHEROKEE OVERLAND ECODIESEL

By Sean P. Holman

Whether it's a utility trailer or travel trailer, the Grand Cherokee makes quick work of hooking up, especially if you have to do it alone. On the bumper you'll find a 4 and 7-pin connector, along with a Class III hitch, and the 8.4-inch Uconnect display shows a large image provided by the backup camera. Another helpful feature is the self-leveling, four-corner air suspension that can be adjusted up or down to better match the tongue height of the trailer.

Our Grand Cherokee is equipped not with a gasoline-fed Hemi V-8, but rather a grunty 3.0L EcoDiesel V-6. With 420 lb-ft of torque on tap (that's 30 more lb-ft than the Hemi), our four-wheel-drive Grand has a tow rating

of 7,200-pounds, the same as its Hemi-equipped brethren. Two-wheel drive models are rated at 7,400 pounds.

On-road, the Grand had no trouble bringing our 6,500 pounds of trailer up to highway speeds. The steering is weighted nicely and the SUV is a stable towing platform, thanks in part to the Trailer Sway Control (TSC) system. TSC recognizes a swaying trailer and can also improve handling in crosswinds or with an improperly loaded trailer, giving the average user a larger margin for safety. Even with a load nearing the advertised limits, the brakes feel strong, although we will be adding Mopar's accessory trailer brake controller in the



LOGBOOK QUOTES

"We washed a pair of jeans with the key fob in the pocket, then dried them. True to the Jeep heritage, our key fob was no worse for the wear and still works."

"Just towed close to 6,500 pounds and the Grand handled it with ease, although I would have liked the peace of mind of a integrated trailer brake controller."

"Just filled up next to an EcoDiesel Ram. I'm starting to see more of these two vehicles out in the wild."

coming weeks.

While there is no dedicated tow/haul button in the Grand, the ZF 8HP70 eight-speed automatic transmission does a masterful job of gear selection. Additionally, the Grand is equipped with steering-wheel-mounted paddle shifters for any desired manual intervention.

Most of our towing to this point has been around town and less than 50 miles at a time, but we estimate fuel economy to be in the high 10s with a trailer attached, putting the trailering range at more than 400 miles.

During this report we watched the odometer roll past 10,000 miles, bringing us into Huntington Beach Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram in Huntington Beach, California, for our first scheduled service stop. Interestingly enough, we did not have to replenish the DEF tank once during those miles and the DEF warning light came on within 50 miles of our "service due" warning—right on time. In addition to the scheduled service, a couple electronic module updates and a service bulletin on the halfshaft boot clamp were required, but the Jeep was turned around quick, and the dealership even washed it for us.

To this point, we have been nothing short of impressed with the EcoDiesel V-6 and flexibility of our Grand, but we plan to push it further in the next quarter with more highway miles, both with and without a trailer attached.

Electronic Stability Control

PICKING UP WHEN TRACTION GIVES OUT

12

lectronic Stability Control, or ESC, is designed to prevent a driver's loss-of-control frequently caused by insufficient traction. The two basic loss-of-traction events are referred to as understeer (plowing)

and oversteer (spin out). An example of understeer is driving straight down an icy road and turning left or right to avoid an obstruction. Because of the lack of traction at the front wheels, the vehicle will continue traveling in a relatively straight line, ignoring the direction of the driver's steer. Oversteer is a loss of traction at the rear wheels, driving straight on a slippery, wet, road surface, and attempting an abrupt hard turn. The front tires grab, but the rears don't, causing the rear end to slide sideways, potentially resulting in a 180-degree spin.

Either loss-of-traction event (or a combination of the two) can lead to a collision or rollover crash. Rollovers most often occur when a loss of control causes the vehicle to veer off the roadway, then "trip" on a curb, soft shoulder, and so on. Untripped rollovers are much less common, less than 5 percent according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), and come about with top-heavy vehicles and/or an overly aggressive maneuver with good traction.

ESC is a great safety concept, which does save lives. As of model-year '12, all U.S.-bound vehicles with a gross vehicle weight of 10,000 pounds

or less are required to have an ESC system. The NHTSA predicts that offering ESC on all vehicles may annually save 5,300-9,600 lives and prevent 156,000-238,000 injuries.

So let's take a look at how ESC works and how it was developed.

We'll start off with the anti-lock braking system (ABS). It may seem unrelated but quite the opposite is true. ABS actually began in 1929 with a fully mechanical version used on aircraft landing gear. Experimental versions were slowly applied to motorcycles and automobiles through the '50s and '60s, but Chrysler and the Bendix Corporation developed the first modern (electronic) ABS system with production of the '71 Imperial. The rest of the industry eventually followed suit.

The key to electronic ABS was the installation of wheel speed sensors, which report to the electronic control unit (ECU). The ECU receives individual speed inputs from all four wheels, as opposed to just one reading from the transmission indicating vehicle speed. With this data, the ECU predicts the instant a tire is about to lock up (skid) when the brakes are applied. The ECU immediately responds with commands to hydraulic valves and a fluid pump to control brake pressure at each wheel independently. By reducing the brake pressure (in a pulsing, high-speed process), each wheel will continue to spin at a determined low rate of speed and maintain traction. In most circumstances, ABS

can reduce stopping distance, but its principal benefit is maintaining steering control during loss of traction while hitting the brakes.

A bit more trivia: ever heard of MaxTrac? This was the earliest stage of an electronic traction control system (TCS) implemented by Buick on the full-size, rear-wheel-drive '71 Riviera. MaxTrac used an ECU with inputs from a left-front wheel speed sensor and a transmission speed sensor to compare the front-to-rear wheel speed difference. When the ECU detected higher wheel speed (wheel spin) from the rear axle due to lack of traction, it would modulate engine power accordingly by interrupting the ignition circuit. This would therefore reduce drive-wheel spin and regain some traction, regardless of the driver's position on the accelerator pedal.

Today's most recent traction control systems do basically the same thing as far as engine power reduction, only with the use of electronic throttle control (ETC), but modern TCS is also integrated with ABS. Just like anti-lock brakes use wheel speed input, commands to hydraulic valves, and a pump to control braking pressure and prevent wheel-skid, TCS applies brake pressure at each wheel with your foot off the brake (along with throttle control), to reduce wheel spin at the drive wheels while accelerating on low-traction surfaces (wet roads, sand, snow, etc.).

Knowing ABS and TCS operation helps us



understand electronic stability control. ESC fundamentally combines the technology of ABS and TCS with additional data used in the algorithm, along with modifications to hardware components. The two new data inputs are steering angle and yaw rate. Steering angle is data received by the ECU from a sensor mounted in the steering column. The steering angle sensor determines how many degrees, left or right, the driver is turning the steering wheel. The yaw rate, or rotational speed sensor, involves the direction and degree of potential vehicle spin. Look back at oversteer, where the vehicle loses rear-wheel traction and spins out. That amount of spinning momentum is the yaw rate.

Now we can put it all together and view ESC



operation. A vehicle traveling in low-traction conditions is about to oversteer on a hard turn at excessive speed. The ESC control unit looks at wheel speed, steering angle, and yaw rate, and it determines an oversteer event is about to take place. Now that it's quickly analyzing all the data, the ECU sends out instantaneous commands. By applying precise amounts of brake pressure at the appropriate wheels and regulating engine power when needed, the ESC prevents the oversteer. The system realistically views the difference between the driver's intended course and what's really going to happen and dictates the necessary actions to maintain control.

Credit goes to Robert Bosch GmbH and Mercedes-Benz for the introduction of today's ESC systems with the '95 S-Class sedan. Electronic Stability Control (ESC) is a fully recognized generic term, but the system goes by various names deemed by each manufacturer, although principles, components, and operation are very similar.

***Electronic Stability Program**

(ESP; various automakers)

***StabiliTrak**

(General Motors)

***Vehicle Stability Assist**

(VSA; Honda, Acura, and Hyundai)

***Vehicle Stability Control**

(VSC; Toyota and Lexus)

***Vehicle Dynamic Control**

(VDC; various automakers)

***Dynamic Stability Control**

(DSC; BMW, Jaguar Land Rover, and Mazda)

***AdvanceTrac with Roll Stability Control**

(Ford)

ABS and TCS are now incorporated with the ESC system. Often the control unit, hydraulic pump, solenoids, and valves are combined in a single assembly referred to as a modulator unit, located in series with the brake lines between the master cylinder and all four brake calipers (or wheel cylinders in rear drum brake applications). The control unit uses network communications with other relative systems such as powertrain control.

ABS/TCS/ESC has been enhanced over time with additions including Active Rollover Protection (ARP), Emergency Brake Assist (EBA), and Dynamic Rear Proportioning (DRP). ARP adds a rollover or lateral acceleration sensor to aid the ESC system in preventing vehicle rollover. EBA determines an emergency braking situation by viewing the speed off the accelerator and on to the brake pedal. When an emergency is detected and the driver's force on the pedal is insufficient, additional brake pressure is applied until ABS takes over. DRP



is a method of proportioning rear-wheel and front-wheel brake pressure for optimum stopping power.

Automatic braking is cutting-edge technology. By detecting a pending collision with the use of radar, video, infrared, ultrasonic, or other sources, the ABS/TCS/ESC system can apply the brakes independently with no input from the driver. This can prevent or reduce the severity of collisions. The same technology is used in adaptive cruise control to maintain a safe distance from vehicles ahead.

During real-world use of ESC, typically an indicator light will flash while the system is operating. Depending on the severity of the event, the driver may feel nothing, thanks to seamless operation, or a degree of noise/vibration from the modulator unit. The majority of ESC-equipped vehicles provide a switch that fully or partially disables ESC and TCS temporarily. This may be used in unusual situations where TCS cannot get the vehicle out of snow or mud. And yes, ESC should be turned off prior to doing a burnout with sportier models.

Just like the powertrain control module, which controls engine functions, the ESC system performs self-diagnostics. If the ESC, TCS, ABS, ESC Off, or any combination of these warning lights remain on, this indicates a failure, the system is disabled, and a diagnostic trouble code (DTC) is stored in memory to aid in repair.

Obviously, ESC cannot maintain vehicle control in all situations, like extreme weather conditions or overly aggressive driving. A driver may even counteract the advantages of ESC with more extreme cornering as compared to driving a non-ESC vehicle. Aside from racecar driving (risk expected), taking any vehicle to its outer limits of control is an accident waiting to happen.

A lot of off-road enthusiasts do consider this stuff cheating, but recent programs based on the ABS/TCS/ESC system can be a distinct advantage. Traction control and anti-lock brakes alone take a 4x4 in low range to new levels crossing severe rocky or soft terrain. But sub-systems similar to Toyota's Crawl Control provide even more enhanced capabilities. Using the basics of ABS/TCS and a little throttle control, Crawl Control allows a driver to dial-in a designated low speed of travel in low-range four-wheel drive. Once engaged, the vehicle creeps along, providing optimum traction and eliminating driver error at the pedals. This focuses the driver's attention on steering and keeping the truck in an upright position.

Remember all these utilities are building blocks on the foundation of anti-lock brakes, and there will be new ideas added to the mix in future models. Just like PCs, smartphones, and tablets, software technology is a remarkable aspect of the entire system. **TT**

WRITE TO US!

If you have a technical question regarding your pickup, SUV, or van, feel free to contact us! Send a letter care of *Truck Trend* Shop Class, 831 S. Douglas Street, El Segundo, CA 90245, or email us at mail@trucktrend.com. Due to the volume of questions received every month, we cannot guarantee that everyone's question will be personally answered or will appear in the magazine.

By Colin RYAN



PETERBILT

MOVING AMERICA

They're a common sight on all roads in the United States, but there's still something awe-inspiring about a Peterbilt. The size, the grandeur, and knowing there's likely 1,750 lb-ft of torque rumbling beneath the long, squared-off hood that's as American as wagon trains and cowboy hats. And the reason why these giants exist is to keep the national economy turning over. So there's something noble about them as well.

Theodore Alfred "Al" Peterman was in the lumber business in Tacoma, Washington, in the first half of the 20th century, but he was having trouble seeing the loot for the trees. Rather inconveniently, they all grew in forests in the middle of nowhere, and America's road infrastructure was still not in place. Peterman did the usual thing at the time of floating them downriver, but the up-and-coming automotive industry quickly made the old ways look inefficient. To grow with the times, he decided to take surplus army trucks and re-purpose them for hauling logs to the mills.

Peterman bought ailing truck company Fageol in 1939 for \$200,000 and created the first Peterbilt trucks. They looked a lot like Fageol machines but were made to Peterman's specifications. These were chain driven with a 6x4 configuration, using aluminum to save weight. In 1940, the company produced 82 trucks. Peterman wanted to go for quality over quantity. When World War II prompted the need for military vehicles, Peterbilt gained more engineering and production expertise that would be useful in peacetime. The company made 225 trucks for the government in 1944.

Peterman died of cancer that same year, at the relatively young age of 51, and never saw the company grow to the status it has now enjoyed for several decades. His widow, Ida, assumed ownership of the company, which she soon sold to five of Peterbilt's managers for \$450,000. Having kept the name is a testament to how well regarded these trucks became in such a relatively short time.

Cab-over-engine (COE) designs were popular back in those days because of government restrictions on truck lengths. However, as regulations over length changed or disappeared, COE became the minority. Curiously, a "cab-over Pete" is mentioned in the 1975 novelty song, "Convoy."

In the 1950s, the company pioneered the "Dromedary" setup where there's a cargo section between the cab and the trailer set on the actual tractor unit. The Peterbilt badge changed from script-in-a-rectangle to script-in-an-oval in 1952.

In the Transformers movie franchise, Optimus



Prime has the ability to become a Peterbilt Model 379 (one of the company's best sellers), complete with flame-effect paint job.

Going from science fiction to science fact, NASA has run a fleet of Petes to haul all that rocket technology around. Robb Mariani, hosting the old Speed Channel's American Trucker series, said, "As important as space exploration is to NASA, they could not get to their destination, nor return, without the groundwork that these great trucks have done throughout the years."

Manufacturing facilities have come and gone. There were once factories in Newark, California, and Madison, Tennessee. Peterbilt is currently headquartered in Denton, Texas, at a facility established in 1980.

Ironically, Peterbilt's main rival, Kenworth, is owned by the same parent corporation, the Pacific Car and Foundry Company (PACCAR, which bought Peterbilt in 1958). Petes are perceived as more upscale (a new Model 389 could easily come in at \$160,000), although a Kenworth driver would hardly be slumming it. And some drivers prefer the feel of a Kenworth clutch over that of a Pete's.

Ultimately, the romance around Peterbilt came about for down-to-earth reasons. It's a well-made vehicle with premium appointments. And it's reliable—No one wants their rig in the shop costing money when there are loads to be delivered. That's why resale values are so strong. A Pete works on so many levels, inspiring life-long loyalty. One commenter on a trucking website put it this way: "Learned to drive truck in a Pete, grew up around Petes, owned only Petes, named my son Pete." TT

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By Brett Evans

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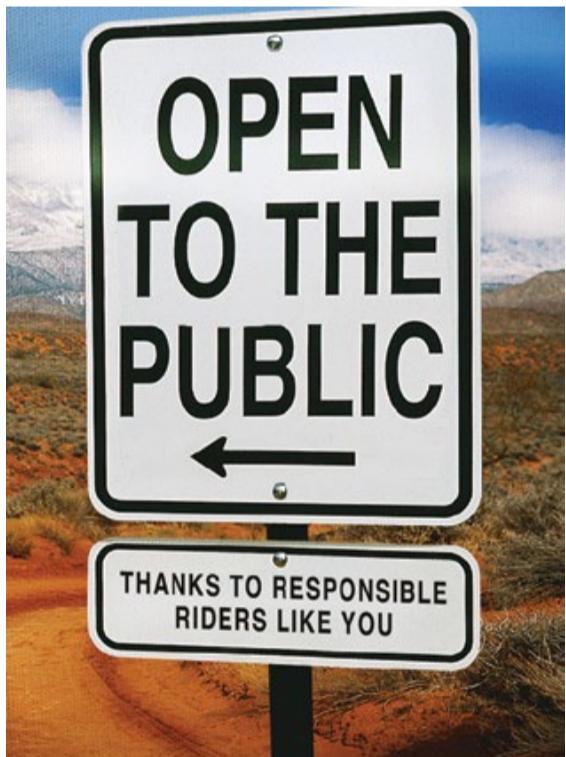
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By Colin RYAN



Land Rover LR3

2005-2009

Land Rover has been around and negotiating tough terrain since 1948, so the Land Rover LR3 is the product of decades of experience and expertise. Its blend of capability and refinement makes it a desirable and intriguing midsize SUV with seating for up to seven.

The great thing that debuted with the LR3 in 2005 was the company's Terrain Response System. Up until then, serious off-roading was all down to the hardware and the nut behind the wheel. Now there were computers coming to the rescue, or at least not putting the vehicle in a position where it needed rescuing in the first place.

Settings are for grass/gravel/snow, mud/ruts, sand, rock crawl, and general on-road driving. There are some wrinkles to remember: for deep snow, use the sand setting; wet sand may be better dealt with by the mud/ruts setting; and rock crawl is only available when the permanent all-wheel-drive transmission is in low range. Each setting will call up a different arrangement of throttle response, gearing, and differential locking to suit the relevant scenario.

Other electronic aids include hill descent control, hill start assist, rollover prevention, height adjustment of the air suspension, and stability and traction controls. Naturally, the right tires and the right input from the driver will all contribute to safe and steady progress, but the electronics do a lot of the heavy lifting.

Speaking of heavy, the LR3 with the V-8 can tow 7,700 pounds. Where sport utility vehicles usually deploy ladder-frame or one-piece body construction, this one is a bit of both. Land Rover calls it Integrated Body Frame (IBF). The result is a

rigid vehicle with excellent wheel articulation. It's possible to have the front axle angled one way, the rear angled the other, and then open a passenger door as if the LR3 is parked on the street. Not that many people would want to do such a thing, but it does illustrate the body's rigidity.

Initially, trim levels were SE, with a 4.0L V-6 making 216 hp and 254 lb-ft of torque and HSE, propelled by 300 hp and 315 lb-ft from a 4.4L V-8. By 2008, when there was a mild facelift, the V-8

2005-2009 Land Rover LR3

BODY TYPE	4-door SUV
DRIVETRAIN	Front engine, 4WD
AIRBAGS	Driver, front passenger, side, side curtain
ENGINES	4.0L/216hp SOHC V-6; 4.4L/300hp DOHC V-8
BRAKES, F/R:	Disc, disc, ABS
PRICE RANGE, WHLSL/RETAIL (KBB)	\$6,507/\$7,736 (2005, AWD SE 4.0 V-6), \$25,888/\$27,777 (2009, 4WD HSE Lux 4.4 V-8)
RECALLS	Too many to list; see motortrend.com



engine became the sole engine. This is a good thing because the V6 has a hard time moving what is, at around 5,800 pounds, a fairly hefty machine. Trim levels also changed that year to base, HSE, and HSE Lux.

Get underneath to make sure the front and rear skid plates are still in place. While you're there, look for damage inflicted by off-roading ventures and corroded AC lines.

Look for uneven tire wear. This could point to wheel alignment issues or problems with the air suspension, especially if said tire wear is accompanied by the vehicle sitting unevenly on its springs. There may be some leaks in the system. Bushings will need replacing after 75,000 miles, and it could be a good idea to replace the front lower control arms as well. At around 40,000 miles, there may be some steering play from worn front tie-rod arms.

The Terrain Response System is a clever piece of technology but also a complex one. It's worth giving the electrics a thorough going-over, from the battery to the parking sensors and all points in between. A vehicle this recent should also have a complete record of service and maintenance, along with both keys. Don't forget to carry out the normal checks as well, such as lights, brakes, etc.

An '07 HSE in good condition is valued at \$14,421. The '07 Acura MDX is another seven-seater but has to make do with a V-6 and inferior off-road chops. Even so, a comparable model could cost \$14,839. A five-seat '07 Jeep Grand Cherokee Limited with a 4.7L V-8 is booked at \$11,114. An '07 BMW X5 can seat seven and enjoys a 4.8L V-8. It's also one of the finest driving vehicles of its kind and can still tackle some trickier surfaces. It's pricier than the equivalent LR3, though, at \$16,080. **TT**



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